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tours



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Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean
(Courtesy of the Theatre Collection, Harvard
College Library)

LETTERS OF
MR. AND MRS. CHARLES KEAN
RELATING TO
THEIR AMERICAN TOURS

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MR. AND MRS. CHARLES KEAN
RELATING TO
THEIR AMERICAN TOURS

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TO MY SONS
BRUCE AND WILLIAM

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PREFACE

The following pages do not purport to present a definitive biography of Charles and Ellen Kean or a thorough study of their contributions to the development of the British and American stages. That task, if it is to be undertaken, must await the return of more normal times when it will be possible to assemble and examine the various manuscripts and other related material now scattered about this country, Great Britain, and probably Australia. This study will, I believe, prove to be rewarding and significant, because the Keans, although not to be ranked among the greatest actors of our history, are entitled to recognition as among the most important artists of their day and as producers of exceptional brilliance, especially of the plays of Shakespeare. The fact that tastes have changed should not make us forget what they accomplished or the influence they exercised upon their own and succeeding generations in the theatre.

All that I have attempted here is the presentation of correspondence comprised in two considerable collections of their papers, together with a few other letters obtained from different sources. Those papers chosen relate to their various American tours, together with two or three others which present background material illustrative of their personal characteristics and of the conditions under which they worked.

One of the collections is made up of letters written over a period of nearly thirty years by both Keans to Sol Smith, the St. Louis comedian and manager, now in the possession of the Missouri Historical Society in St. Louis. The other is in my possession and includes many letters written both by and to the Keans which have not been used here because they have little or no bearing upon the purpose referred to above. I have, furthermore, very kindly been permitted to include a number of letters belonging to the Theatre Collection of the Harvard College Library, the Theatre Collection of the New York Public Library, and Mr. Maynard Morris.*

* The following letters appeared in *Glimpses of the Past*, a publication of the Missouri Historical Society, Vol. V, Nos. 7-9, July-September, 1938: Ellen Kean to Sol Smith, May 4, 1865; Charles Kean to Sol Smith, 20 May, 1865; Charles Kean to Sol Smith, 29 May, 1865.

PREFACE

Apparently the Keans' daughter, Mrs. Cosmo Gordon Logie, at one time planned to collect and publish her parents' correspondence. There are among my papers printed copies, quite obviously proof sheets, of the first pages of two letters headed "COPY OF PAPA'S LETTER" and "COPY OF MAMMA'S LETTER," respectively. Moreover, some of the letters in the Harvard Collection bear comments written on them by the recipients which seem to me to have been intended to assist someone in editing the documents. Others are undoubtedly Kean's drafts of letters of which he wished to preserve copies. But the great majority are clearly the originals themselves. (For instance, I am very sure that Mrs. Kean did not copy the lengthy epistles she indited to Miss Marianne Skerrett.) Mrs. Logie, however, evidently died before completing her work, and her only son, if he outlived her at all, did so for only a very short time. Her death occurred on January 4, 1898, and on June 23, according to Mr. Percy J. Dobell of Tunbridge Wells, the "Library and Autographs of Charles Kean were sold at Messrs. Sotheby's."

The work of editing these letters has presented some difficulties. Under existing conditions it has been impossible to run to earth all clues. Furthermore, the handwriting of Mrs. Kean, especially when she was agitated, cannot always be deciphered. "It is a bit odd," wrote the late Otis Skinner, "that the college-bred Charles should spell so badly. Ellen, too, might have been a little less sloppy; she spent her life in constant association with the literature of classic plays. However, it's all very picturesque and charming."

Several years have passed since I began to prepare these letters for publication, and during that time I have had the benefit of the assistance and co-operation of many people. Not all of this help can be cited here, but I must acknowledge my indebtedness to a few persons, notably: Mrs. Stella Drumm Atkinson and Mrs. Brenda Gieseke of the Missouri Historical Society, who aided me in the study of the manuscripts in the Society's possession; Dr. William Van Lennep, Curator of the Theatre Collection of the Harvard College Library; Mr. George Freedley, Curator, and Mrs. Elizabeth P. Barrett, Assistant-in-Charge, of the Theatre Collection of the New York Public Library; Mrs. Richard F.

PREFACE

Jones, who unearthed for me much useful information in London; Professors Walter Pritchard Eaton, Allardyce Nicoll, and James Flagg Bemis of Yale University; Mr. Percy J. Dobell of Tunbridge Wells, England; Mr. R. A. Austen-Leigh and Mr. Quickswood, Provost of Eton; Mr. A. S. Paterson, H. B. M. Consul in St. Louis; Mr. Horace F. Grimm, State Supervisor, Missouri State Historical Records Survey; Professor William S. Clark of the University of Cincinnati; Miss Katherine Anderson of the Library Association of Portland, Oregon; Miss Ethel L. Hutchins of the Public Library of Cincinnati; and Mr. John Hall Jacobs of the New Orleans Public Library. Finally, as always, I am indebted to my wife for her invaluable counsel and assistance.

Without them, this could not be.

William G. B. Carson

St. Louis, August 5, 1944.

INTRODUCTION

Charles John Kean was the second and only surviving son of Edmund Kean, in Otis Skinner's phrase "perhaps the greatest genius the English-speaking stage has ever known." His mother was the former Mary Chambers, an actress of but little talent and in herself of no importance. He was born on January 18, 1811, in Ireland, at Waterford, his mother's home town, in which his father happened to be playing at the time. The father "was engaged at a salary of five and twenty shillings a week, the leading member of a company playing now at Swansea, now at Carmarthen, now at Haverfordwest, and thence crossing to Ireland. . . . He had suffered much from indigence and even the pangs of hunger."¹ The glory which was to come was still three years away and as yet undreamed of by any except Edmund himself.

From this penury there came relief at last. By sheer bravado Kean forced the recognition of his genius. Returning home from Drury Lane on the night of his triumph, the great man cried out jubilantly that his wife should have her carriage and that "Charlie" should go to Eton. In due time the promise was kept, and to Eton Charlie went in 1824, when he was thirteen years of age. There he took an active part in the school life and made many friends among his aristocratic classmates. The boy expected, naturally enough, to be the heir to a great fortune and looked forward to the same type of career as would fall to the lot of his well-born associates. His father preferred the Navy, his mother the church.² Unfortunately, however, swept off his feet by his success and the instability of his character, the elder Kean gave himself over to dissipation and folly, and began the rapid descent from the heights which was to bring his sensational career to a premature close six years later.

It was soon no longer possible for Charles to continue at an expensive school. Whether inspired by social ambition or by jealous fear, his father was determined that he should not adopt the stage as a profession. So he induced a friend³ to offer the boy

¹ Dutton Cook, *Hours with the Players* (London, 1881), II, 233-234.

² *Ibid.*, II, 236.

³ J. Calcraft, "a member of Parliament, and one of the most influential of the Drury Lane Committee of that day." [John William Cole, *The Life and Theatrical Times of Charles Kean, F. S. A.* (London, 1859), I, 145. The F. S. A. indicates "Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries."]

a place with the East India Company. This Charles agreed to accept provided that his father would increase Mrs. Kean's allowance from £200 to £300 a year.⁴ Such provision the actor could not or would not promise, and to his indignation his offer was rejected. The son's assertion that he would try his luck on the stage evoked an outburst of rage from his father. "In the following July, when the Eton vacation came on, Charles Kean was informed that his accounts were paid up, his allowance stopped, and that he was not to return."⁵

At this juncture Yankee shrewdness played the part of fate. Stephen Price, the American lessee of Drury Lane Theatre, having just quarreled with Edmund Kean and lost his services, saw a way in which to get revenge on his former star and also make some money in a sensational manner. He offered the youth his chance on the very stage which his father had just quit. Before accepting, the former insisted upon writing his father, and Price undertook to deliver the letter, but no answer was received. So Charles went ahead and signed an agreement to act for Price for three years, the salary to be £10 a week for the first year, £11 for the second and £12 for the third, provided always that he was successful.⁶

Drury Lane was in 1827 one of the two leading theatres in London, the only two which were licensed to produce plays by Shakespeare. (One other, the Haymarket, was permitted to do so during certain months only. In 1843 this restriction was lifted by Parliament.) Charles Kean was at this time a youth of barely sixteen without any acting experience whatsoever. Yet he was not presented in a minor role. Like so many other young actors of his day, he made his debut as Young Norval in the Reverend Doctor Home's *Douglas*, one of the principal characters in the play. But Price made no mistake. He was interested, not in an artistic success for his protégé, but in a pecuniary one for himself. And the house was full. The awkward boy was received with a roar of welcome from a huge audience composed largely of the curious, who had come to see what his father's son could do. They soon saw. It was very little. His performance, even when he had overcome his not unnatural stage fright, evidenced

⁴ Cook, *op. cit.*, II, 237.

⁵ Cole, *op. cit.*, I, 147.

⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 149.

considerable familiarity with his father's methods and mannerisms, but pathetically little of his power. Throughout the evening the applause was diminuendo. The surprising thing is that anything else was expected and that the critics took the novice to task for not accomplishing the impossible.

Yet he remained at Drury Lane throughout the season, reappearing occasionally as Norval and attempting a few other roles. There could, however, be no disguising the fact that he had failed. But, if Charles Kean inherited nothing else from his father, he did inherit his unbreakable will and tenacity of purpose. Moreover, he had his mother to support. So after some more rather fruitless attempts, he took to the provinces. There he sought experience, income, and relief from the great humiliation he had endured. A reconciliation with his father having been effected, the two made in Glasgow on October 1, 1828, a joint appearance in the tragedy of *Brutus* by John Howard Payne. In 1829 he crossed over to Ireland for further appearances with his father. In London he tried his luck at the Haymarket as Reuben Glenroy in *Town and Country* and Sir Edward Mortimer in *The Iron Chest*, the latter one of the most taxing roles in English melodrama. He also paid a disastrous visit to Holland.

Then, during the summer of 1830 he sailed for America, the gold mine which has provided the old-age security of many a British player, opening in September at the Park Theatre in New York. In this country he remained until 1833, appearing in theatres as far west as New Orleans and Natchez, in the tragic roles associated with the name of Kean—Richard III, Othello, Sir Giles Overreach, and others equally exacting.⁷ Although his youth and limitations, physical and otherwise, were not overlooked, he was warmly received and returned home with his pockets well lined.

On March 25, 1833, not long after his return, occurred the last, fatal joint appearance with his father. This was in *Othello* at Covent Garden. The older man, playing the Moor to Charles' Iago, collapsed on the stage and gasped to his son, "O God, I am dying! Speak to them for me." On May 15 Edmund Kean died.

By the exercise of sheer will-power plus unsparing study

⁷ William Bryan Gates, "Performances of Shakespeare in Ante-Bellum Mississippi," *The Journal of Mississippi History* (January, 1943).

Charles Kean gradually compelled the public to recognize him. Five years after his mortifying debut he had £20,000, earned in his provincial engagements.⁸ He became one of the outstanding players of the day, accepted both in his own country and in the United States, to which he paid a not-too-satisfactory second visit in 1839.

A rather depressing account of this second tour is given by his official biographer, J. W. Cole.

During the following September he appeared at the National Theatre in Church Street, New York, then under the management of Mr. J. Wallack. The house was crowded and enthusiastic, but after this auspicious commencement clouds gathered rapidly, and a series of fatalities seemed to attend Charles Kean's second visit to the United States. When he began to act, he was suffering from an affection of the throat; exertion made his voice give way, and on the fourth night he entirely broke down. The theatre was soon after destroyed by fire.

But that was not all. While he was playing in Boston, a counterweight fell from above the stage and killed a supernumerary standing near Kean, so near in fact that the star's clothing was spattered with blood.⁹

After all these catastrophes, it is not surprising that he returned to England. There, or rather in Ireland, he greatly strengthened his position by marrying the popular actress Ellen Tree, with whom he had frequently appeared in Great Britain and also in Germany. The ceremony was performed in Dublin while they were filling an engagement in that city. It is, I am sure, quite safe to say that this marriage was the most fortunate event in his life.

In 1842 Ellen Tree had been for years an established favorite on the stages of England and America. Born in 1805, according to the *Dictionary of National Biography*, somewhere in Ireland, she was six years her husband's senior. The *Dictionary* identifies her father as "a Mr. Tree of Lancaster Buildings, St. Martin's Lane, London."¹⁰ According to Laurence Hutton, she was "the daughter of a contemporary of Charles Lamb in the East India House" and was born in London.¹¹ A phrase in one of her let-

⁸ Cook, *op. cit.*, II, 244.

⁹ Cole, *op. cit.*, I, 307-308.

¹⁰ *Dictionary of National Biography* (London, 1885), XXX, 265.

¹¹ *Macready and Forrest; and Their Contemporaries* (in *Actors and Actresses of Great Britain and the United States*, edited by Brander Matthews and Laurence Hutton) (New York, 1886), p. 100.

ters, in which she refers to the Irish as *her husband's* countrymen, would seem at least to suggest that they were not hers.¹² She was one of four sisters who occupied respected positions in the British theatre. One, Mrs. Quin, was a dancer. Maria, later Mrs. Bradshaw, was a singer and enjoyed the distinction of having created the title role in Payne's *Clari*, and so of being the first to sing "Home Sweet Home," at least in public.¹³ The third, to quote Hutton again, "in a more humble, but not less reputable line, was popular in London and the provinces as a 'singing chambermaid' and *soubrette* for many years."¹⁴ This was Anne, who married a Mr. Chapman, identified by the *Dictionary of National Biography* as "John Philip Chapman, proprietor of the 'Sunday Times,'" and by Erroll Sherson in his *London's Lost Theatres of the Nineteenth Century* as "John Kemble Chapman," a theatrical producer of no great prominence.¹⁵ Whatever his correct name, by 1860 he had died and his children had become responsibilities of the Keans.

J. W. Cole asserts in his biography of Kean that Ellen Tree made her debut in Edinburgh at the age of eighteen.¹⁶ Inasmuch as this book was written, figuratively speaking, with Kean looking over his shoulder, if not guiding his pen, the statement is probably correct. In 1823 she was the Olivia in a musical version of *Twelfth Night* produced at Covent Garden, her sister Maria being the Viola. The next two or three years found her in provincial theatres, notably at Bath. On September 23, 1826, as it happened almost a year to the day before her future husband began his great adventure under Price, she appeared for the first time at Drury Lane, where she remained until 1829, when she transferred the scene of her activities back to Covent Garden.¹⁷ There, among other parts, she played Romeo to the Juliet of Fanny Kemble, who says in her memoirs that Miss Tree was the only Romeo she ever acted with who really looked the part.¹⁸ In 1832 she was chosen to create the leading role,

¹² Ellen Tree to Sol Smith, May 4, 1865. Letter in the possession of the Missouri Historical Society.

¹³ *Macready and Forrest; and Their Contemporaries*, p. 100.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *D. N. B.*, XXX, 265. Erroll Sherson, *London's Lost Theatres of the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1925), pp. 39-40.

¹⁶ Cole, *op. cit.*, I, 331.

¹⁷ *D. N. B.*, XXX, 265.

¹⁸ Frances Ann Kemble, *Records of a Girlhood* (New York, 1879), p. 200.

Françoise de Foix, in Miss Kemble's new play, *Francis the First*. Identified chiefly with comedy parts requiring the exercise of little power, Ellen Tree had not made a startlingly auspicious beginning. But, like Kean, she was blessed with tremendous self-confidence and a determination not to be stopped. She was not stopped. She steadily acquired more and more technical proficiency and so was enabled to display to the best advantage her extremely charming personality and was soon accepted in London as one of the foremost young actresses of the day, even in roles of a much more serious nature than those in which she had at first succeeded.

In 1836 she for the first time invaded the United States, and such was her popularity that she was able, despite the grumbling of managers, to command exceptionally "attractive" terms. "Her tour lasted nearly three years; she played in every important theatre in the country, and carried home with her £12,000 in cash, and the affection and esteem of the American people . . ." ¹⁹ She covered the then settled portion of the country from New York to St. Louis, and from Buffalo to Mobile. "Miss Ellen Tree's engagement, is concluded;" wrote an unidentified lady from St. Louis in April, 1838; "she captivated our citizens." But down in Mississippi the good people did not like her in tights. "We are sorry to say that she was not, could not be, the *lover* Romeo . . . She is a lady . . . and an accomplished one . . . Romeo was a man . . . How can a woman know those masculine traits?" Nevertheless, the writer did go on to say that "Romeo was performed better than any other *lady* could do, and in some scenes we had forgot that one of the other sex was acting Romeo." ²⁰ Ellen Tree never forgot her early American triumphs.

She returned to England in the summer of 1839, and two and a half years later she married Kean. No match ever turned out more ideally. Throughout the twenty-six years they spent together they lived in mutual devotion, their happiness unmarred by any rift or scandal. When they were married, *Ellen Tree* was assuredly as great a name as *Charles Kean*, if not, in fact, a greater. But with the ceremony, or, rather, with the

¹⁹ *Macready and Forrest; and Their Contemporaries*, p. 101.

²⁰ *Mississippi Free Trader*, March 9 and 11, 1839; Gates, *op. cit.*, p. 6. Kean himself had played Romeo in the same town in April, 1831.

public announcement a few days later, it was dropped like a stone to the bottom of the sea. From that day forward she was Mrs. Charles Kean or just Ellen Kean. A lady of stern Victorian principles, she would have greeted with indignation any suggestion that she retain her maiden name.

The change, moreover, was significant of her whole attitude toward her husband. She completely merged her interests and her life with his, though she might *sub rosa* rule the roost just as at home she carved the roast. Thereafter, except when she was ill or some unusual circumstance interfered, they seldom made anything but joint appearances, a custom which sometimes resulted in her playing such slight roles as the Queen in *Richard II* and the Chorus in *Henry V*.

Among the American managers who had profited by Ellen Tree's tour of the United States was Sol Smith, junior member of the celebrated firm of Ludlow and Smith which for nearly twenty years dominated the stages of St. Louis and Mobile, and for a somewhat shorter period that of New Orleans as well.²¹ Smith, who was a shrewd business man, did not forget the gratifying results of this first visit and in 1843 wrote Kean in an attempt to persuade him to bring his wife back to this country for a joint tour. To this suggestion the actor replied, expressing his regret that circumstances made such a visit impossible for the time being. Mrs. Kean was awaiting the birth of a child. The epistle, written in an old-fashioned script with many flourishes, is characterized by a rather courtly dignity and graciousness.²² Kean was in 1843 only thirty-two years of age and had been on the stage but sixteen years; yet already he was starting on the long process of retirement which was to consume a full quarter of a century. It is possible that the reiterated warnings were intended to frighten hesitant managers, but I believe them to have been sincere. The Keans were undoubtedly a very domestic couple and they, I am sure, at least thought that

²¹ Noah M. Ludlow (1795-1886) and Solomon S. Smith (1801-1869) first entered into partnership in 1835. They operated theatres in St. Louis from that date (after 1837 in the handsome New St. Louis Theatre) until 1851. During the same period they operated various houses in Mobile. In 1840 they challenged the supremacy of James Caldwell in New Orleans, managing successively the New American and the New St. Charles. The firm was finally dissolved in 1853.

²² Charles Kean to Sol Smith, July 26, 1843. Letter in the possession of the Missouri Historical Society.

they wanted to retire to private life. This desire can scarcely have been diminished by the birth on September 18 of their daughter, Mary Maria, who proved to be their only child.

The "hope of again visiting the United States" rather perfunctorily expressed by Kean in his letter to Smith amounted with his wife to a determination. Her associations with America had been especially pleasant and she was far too astute a business woman to have forgotten the £12,000 she had carried home with her in 1839. So, obviously at her instigation he returned to the subject somewhat less than two years later.²³ This letter to Smith was composed five years before the Keans embarked on their long tenure of the Princess's Theatre in London with its elaborate Shakespearean revivals and French melodramas which marked the high tide of their careers. Yet again emphasis is laid on their prospective withdrawal from public life, his wife's being set for "in a year or two." No print can give any suggestion of the vigor of the chirography with which he states almost defiantly that they cannot be induced to "leave our Home, family, and all domestic happiness, together with the *certainty* of income in this Country, without a guarantee of *one half the clear receipts in every Theatre we visited.*" This "half the receipts" became a fetish with them and dominated all their business negotiations during the remainder of their professional lives.²⁴

That the American tour was Mrs. Kean's project is made more than clear by the lady herself in a letter she wrote Smith from the Isle of Jersey on June 13.²⁵ She stated flatly that she had taken it "*utterly out of Mr. Kean's hands*" and instructed Smith to write to her. It is apparent from the tenor of this letter that years and success had in no way dulled the business acumen she had displayed before her marriage. Her insistence

²³ Charles Kean to Sol Smith, April 1, 1845. Letter in the possession of the Missouri Historical Society.

²⁴ In a letter dated "Brighton/10 Sept. 1840" and addressed to "M. H. Simpson, Esqr./T.R./Birmingham" Kean expresses indignation at being offered "*thirds and half . . .* When, as you know, Bristol, Bath, Glasgow, Plymouth Exeter, can afford me a clear half of each nights receipts." Apparently he had been offered *thirds* on regular nights and *half* on his benefit night. Letter in the possession of the Theatre Collection, New York Public Library.

²⁵ Ellen Kean to Sol Smith, June 13, 1845. Letter in the possession of the Missouri Historical Society.

upon the very best terms was scarcely less emphatic than her husband's. "I was a *Queen* of Trumps when I was with you before—I am a better actress now and I bring a *King* with me." At the same time her resoluteness was inspired just as much by determination that their prestige should not be compromised as by the more material interest. If William Charles Macready, who in England was still Kean's most important rival, "had half the House," she would see to it that they did too. The phrase was used to indicate half the gross receipts. This was a sore subject with Smith, as it was with all American managers. He frequently inveighed against what he considered the exorbitant demands of stars, demands which, incidentally, were ultimately to have much to do with the final collapse of the stock company system. Yet, after all, Mrs. Kean knew whereof she spoke when she said, as she did in this letter, that he was a good "politician." Even so, he did not surrender at once.

The Keans arrived in New York in August, 1845, and immediately resumed negotiations with Ludlow and Smith, but the western managers were wary and endeavored to make better terms for themselves.²⁶ They preferred to deal with the visitors, not by long-distance correspondence, but through an agent, W. H. Chippendale, an English actor whom they had recently added to their company. Obviously, clear halves were not offered, and Kean, as his letters testify, was very angry. "If Messrs. Smith & Ludlow would offer me half the receipts after *one dollar per night!!!* I would not accept them."²⁷ So a stalemate ensued.

On September 1 the stars opened their engagement at the Park Theatre, New York, in Moore's *The Gamester*, an already outmoded tragedy to which they clung sentimentally throughout their careers. Professor Odell in his *Annals of the New York Stage* quotes *The Spirit of the Times* to the effect that they were greeted by a "most densely crowded audience," which was "enthusiastic in the extreme." He also found that Mrs. Kean elicited greater admiration than did her husband.²⁸ They stayed two

²⁶ Mrs. John Drew in her memoirs calls the partners "proverbially the closest pair in the profession." *Autobiographical Sketch of Mrs. John Drew* (New York, 1899), p. 98.

²⁷ It was the custom of managers to deduct a fixed sum for expenses before dividing the receipts with a star.

²⁸ George C. D. Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage* (New York, 1927-), V, 166.

weeks, appearing in Shakespearean comedies and also in plays by Kotzebue, Bulwer-Lytton, and Tobin. Then they moved on to Philadelphia.

The news of their metropolitan successes was too much for Ludlow and Smith, and they capitulated; but Kean wrote them triumphantly that they had waited too long.²⁹ He went on to Boston. But the thrifty New Englanders did not like the raising of the prices from the usual fifty cents to a dollar, and the management, forced to pay the inevitable clear halves, found itself so embarrassed that Kean generously returned his share of the receipts of the poorest night, Thanksgiving.³⁰

In the meantime, despite the fact that, as Professor Odell reveals, they were able to play four return engagements at the Park, Kean had begun to weaken about the South, and in October he wrote Smith in another vein. He would now consider coming after he had finished in Charleston and Savannah; in fact, he might even give up the latter city for an engagement of forty nights in the three towns under the firm's jurisdiction if satisfactory terms were offered.³¹ They were offered, and in due time the stars proceeded to New Orleans.

The long-debated engagement finally came off in the spring of 1846, as in his recollections Smith notes, "to fine business."³² In the Crescent City it ran from March 2 to 21; in Mobile from March 23 to April 4; and in St. Louis (after an eight-night stopover in New Orleans) from April 25 to May 11.³³

In his account Smith reveals that Kean himself, despite his vanity, entertained serious fears concerning his tour South and West.

Mr. C. Kean was always nervous about the success of any engagement he and his wife were to play, and on this occasion, learning that the times were very bad at the South, his expectation of profit was very moderate—so moderate, indeed, that he offered to sell his share of their forty nights for \$8000, which would be \$200 per night. I had such confidence in the

²⁹ Charles Kean to Sol Smith, September 19, 1845. Letter in the possession of the Missouri Historical Society.

³⁰ William W. Clapp, Jr., *A Record of the Boston Stage* (Boston, 1853), p. 436.

³¹ Charles Kean to Sol Smith, October 30, 1845. Letter in the possession of the Missouri Historical Society.

³² Sol Smith, *Theatrical Management in the West and South for Thirty Years* (New York, 1868), p. 199.

³³ Noah M. Ludlow, *Dramatic Life as I Found It* (St. Louis, 1880), pp. 628-642.

change for the better which had set in, that I was in favor of taking this risk, and I wrote to my partner at Mobile for his consent to the acceptance of the offer, which he refused.³⁴

Ludlow also objected to Smith's assuming the risk personally on the ground that such an action would violate their articles of partnership (which Smith says "had long since expired"). "The result was this," continues the latter; "I was deprived of the opportunity of making \$4000 clear money either for the firm or myself, while Kean pocketed the sum in addition to the amount he was willing to take as a certainty."

In Mobile, according to Ludlow, the guest of honor indulged in a temperamental outburst on his opening night. The orchestra leader, accustomed to playing soft, sad music for death scenes, was suddenly inspired to furnish such an accompaniment for the death-throes of Beverly in *The Gamester*. But such a musical conclusion did not accord with Kean's conception, and upon the fall of the curtain he let fly his rage at the senior partner.³⁵ Smith, having suffered no such onslaught, had different impressions to record.

Of all the star actors and actresses I have had to deal with, Mr. and Mrs. Kean, separately and together, were the most agreeable and friendly. It was a positive pleasure to have them with us. They gave no trouble whatever, and all were anxious to do whatever they requested in the way of stage business. During their engagements they were so unassuming and kind in their demeanor that, were it not for the immense receipts they attracted, you would not have supposed, to see them, that they were anything but the humblest members of the stock company.³⁶

The repertory of this extended season included the following works: *Macbeth*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Hamlet*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *As You Like It*, Moore's *The Gamester*, Talfourd's *Ion* (with Mrs. Kean in the title role, that of a young boy, which had become one of her most admired characterizations), Tobin's *The Honey Moon*, Kotzebue's *The Stranger*, Knowles' *The Hunchback*, Bulwer-Lytton's *The Lady of Lyons*, Mrs. Centlivre's *The Wonder*, Bayley's *Perfection*, and Planché's *The Follies of a Night*. Most of these pieces were given, some of them more than once, in each of the three cities on the circuit. But Mobile did not see *Romeo and Juliet*, and St. Louis

³⁴ Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

³⁵ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, p. 630.

³⁶ Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

missed *The Hunchback* and *The Follies*. The support offered them was certainly adequate, including such accomplished performers as Eliza Riddle Field (in the South), Mary Anne Farren (in St. Louis), Mary Vos Stuart (in the South), Tom Placide, George P. Farren, and Charles Webb, in addition to Ludlow and Smith themselves.³⁷

From among the hundreds of advertisements for quack medicines, merchandise, dame schools, and other commodities, the notices of steamboat arrivals and departures, and the brief news items in the *St. Louis Morning Republican* it is possible to dig out a few laconic comments on the Kean's performances in the Missouri city. The issue of Monday, April 27, reports that they were greeted by "a brilliant and densely crowded audience" and that "overflowing houses" are looked for. The next day the management inserted the following notice.

The Dress Circle and Parquette having been found inadequate to the number of persons who purchased tickets at one dollar each, on Saturday night, while a large portion of the second and third tiers of Boxes remained unoccupied, a part of the second tier has been partitioned off and connected with the Dress Circle in compliance with the wishes of the public.

This same notice was run for several days. Incidentally, the price charged in the second and third tiers was only fifty cents. Probably the élite were a trifle uneasy about the company they might encounter in those exalted seats. Despite the strictness of Ludlow and Smith, theatre audiences in those days were by no means always decorous, even in such strictly supervised houses as those of this firm. On May 4 a brief article recorded the fact that Mrs. Kean's benefit, on the second Saturday of the engagement, had been a "real one." "Rarely," it added, "has a better house been seen here." For Kean's on Tuesday, there was, according to the *Wednesday Republican*, "a perfect jam. The rush for the boxes in the morning was so great that all were taken in a few minutes after the box-office opened." On the following Monday, May 11, they took their joint benefit, appearing in both *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Wonder*, rather a full evening, one would think, for both actors and audience. In a valedictory paragraph the editor paid his tribute. "The genius of Mr. and

³⁷ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, pp. 628-642. Ludlow's recollections must be accepted with some reservations when it comes to casts, but most of these are corroborated by the press.

Mrs. KEAN is too well known and appreciated to need one word from us, and the succession of crowded audiences which have nightly assembled to witness their performances is the most solid and gratifying proof of their estimation by the St. Louis public."³⁸

Financially, as well as artistically, the engagements in all three cities had been extremely successful, and everyone involved had tangible reasons for being satisfied. So excellent had the business been that the number of appearances had been increased to forty-two, not including the benefits, eight for the Keans and one for each of the partners. According to Smith's diary, the gross receipts amounted to \$24,204.50.³⁹ Just how this sum was divided, it is impossible to say now because Smith's records fail to include the terms for the managers' benefits, though possibly the Keans contributed their services. If the figures he gives in his book (already quoted) are correct, the stars carried away about \$12,000. He states that the \$4000 he was prevented from making went to them in addition to the \$8000 Kean had offered to accept. This \$12,000 is of course considerably less than a clear half of the gross receipts, but, since these terms would scarcely apply to the Ludlow and Smith benefits, the discrepancy is easily explained. In a letter written some months later by James Bates, a fellow-manager, Smith is quoted as saying that his firm had made \$100 a night, a total of about \$5000.⁴⁰ Even if less than half the stars' profits, the sum was certainly not a contemptible return, especially in view of the current purchasing power of the dollar. At all events, whatever the exact figures were, everybody, except perhaps Smith who could not forget how much he might have made, seems to have been happy. Comparatively too, the returns had been gratifying. Except during Holy Week in New Orleans, the Keans had done better than either Macready or Forrest, a nightly average of \$666 to the former's \$580; and in St. Louis, \$486 to his \$383.⁴¹

On May 25 they opened at the Park a season which ran

³⁸ *St. Louis Morning Republican*, May 11, 1846.

³⁹ Diary of Sol Smith in the possession of the Missouri Historical Society.

⁴⁰ James Bates to Sol Smith, September 12, 1846. Letter in the possession of the Missouri Historical Society.

⁴¹ Diary of Sol Smith.

through June 9. Others followed in September and October.⁴² They seemed to be always welcome and evidently concluded that the New Yorkers would always follow wherever they led. The previous January they had mounted a very elaborately staged production of *Richard III* which had run nightly for three weeks. Productions of this type were Kean's particular forte. To his passion for them and his exceptional skill in getting them up rather than to his acting are due his fame and his importance in theatrical history. He now determined to honor New York by undertaking for its benefit a venture of considerably greater difficulty and risk, notably a production in the grandest manner of Shakespeare's seldom-acted *King John*. He resolved to overwhelm the city with an exhibition which in elaborateness and authenticity would exceed, not only anything it had ever seen, but also anything it could have imagined.

While this was in preparation, however, he looked ahead and began to lay his plans for the campaign of 1847. These were to include another expedition to the West with stop-offs in Cincinnati and Louisville. But he found to his great indignation that James M. Bates, the new proprietor of the theatres in those two cities, was adamant when it came to clear halves. He flatly refused to pay them and he was at no pains to say so in a tactful manner.⁴³ Charles and Ellen Kean were not accustomed to being treated with so little respect, and their anger was great. At first they declared that this contretemps would prevent their returning to Ludlow and Smith because, as Mrs. Kean wrote Smith, "nothing less than \$4000 would compensate for so long a journey, and there appear to be no other towns to make up for the loss of Louisville and Cincinnati."⁴⁴

Nor did conditions in New York maintain their rosy hue. The lavish presentation of *King John* of which so much had been expected, the first of their Shakespearean revivals mounted with a grandeur which was to dazzle London a few years later, was a failure. Kean had, he felt, cast his pearls before swine. Professor Odell says that the papers estimated the cost of the pro-

⁴² All references to the Keans' 1845-1847 New York engagements are based on Odell, *op. cit.*, V.

⁴³ James Bates' letter cited in note 40.

⁴⁴ Ellen Kean to Sol Smith, October 9, 1846. Letter in the possession of the Missouri Historical Society.

duction at "nearly \$12,000," adding that this was "an extraordinary sum for days when the highest price of admission was one dollar," and when "table board at the Astor House—the last word in hotel elegance, could be had for seven dollars a week!" "The bill," he goes on to say, "proudly proclaimed that the scenery was painted on upwards of 15,000 square feet of canvas." The cast too was imposing. Of course, Kean himself played John, and his wife Constance. The Faulconbridge was George Vandenhoff, frequently a star in his own right, and the Arthur was Susan Denin. The Salisbury was none other than Frank Chanfrau, later to win enormous popularity as Mose in *A Glance at New York*, and "Gentleman George" Barrett, the John Drew of his day, must have been lost in the role of a Citizen of Angiers.⁴⁵

"Well, what was the result of all this preparation and outlay?" asks Vandenhoff in his *Dramatic Reminiscences*. "The piece ran, with some difficulty, to moderate houses, the best of which did not reach £160, for three weeks; and then, to Kean's great mortification and disgust, was superseded by the VIENNOISE CHILDREN (*Enfants terribles!* in Kean's eyes), who crammed the house to suffocation for the following month!"⁴⁶

Under the circumstances Kean's disappointment and chagrin are quite comprehensible. He had seen so many performances of Shakespeare's masterpieces thrown together before any old pieces of stock scenery that happened to be lying around, negligently rehearsed, and badly acted except by the stars, that the determination burned in him to give the plays of the master in a style that was in keeping with their greatness. True, the idea was not exclusively his. Macready had taken steps in the right direction. But he certainly intended to outdo the accomplishments of that gentleman. Ultimately he did so—in London. Although he was unaware of the fact himself, he could not as an actor equal his rival, but as a producer he could excel him, and he did.

During the next few days things clearly went further amiss, and a quarrel broke out between the stars and the management of the Park. Kean was of a painfully suspicious disposition, and

⁴⁵ Odell, *op. cit.*, V, 252 ff.

⁴⁶ George Vandenhoff, *Dramatic Reminiscences or Actors and Actresses in England and America* (London, 1860), p. 221.

his inordinate vanity made him excessively sensitive to slights, both real and imagined. Moreover, the failure of *King John* to set the Hudson ablaze, together with his financial disappointment, must have aggravated his emotional condition. On November 23 he wrote Smith that Edmund Simpson had "behaved extremely ill," and that he and his wife had decided to go to New Orleans in February or March, whichever Smith preferred, and then, after the usual round of the Ludlow and Smith theatres, to return to England.⁴⁷ Nothing was said of the \$4000 profit stipulated by Mrs. Kean. As for Simpson, it is probable that Kean's anger was unjustified. After more than thirty-five years of management, the unfortunate man was struggling to keep the old theatre, now but a ghost of its former self, from utter ruin. The next year he was compelled to give up the struggle, and the famous old playhouse passed its few remaining years in other hands. In July he himself died, friends declared, of a broken heart.

In his *Theatrical Management* Smith records that the New Orleans and Mobile seasons were exceptionally prosperous.⁴⁸ Yet in this success Charles and Ellen Kean had little part. The wind was blowing in another direction. The truth is recorded in "Old Sol's" rather disjointed diary for the year 1847. On Monday, March 22, he jotted down these items:

The Keans arrd. yesterday.
Anderson played last night to a house of \$510.50
The Keans opened this night—Receipts only \$408.25
Profit to L & S \$4 12/100s

So much for *The Jealous Wife*, Colman's comedy. Better things certainly were expected of Lovell's new play, *The Wife's Secret*, which had proved a hit in New York. Unfortunately, expectations were not realized. The receipts dropped to below \$400. Smith's only comment is a rueful exclamation point! Ludlow says in his memoirs: "This play was acted four nights during the engagement, and, I believe, was considered interesting."⁴⁹ Interesting it may have been, but profitable to the management it certainly was not. The returns for the ensuing per-

⁴⁷ Charles Kean to Sol Smith, November 23, 1846. Letter in the possession of the Missouri Historical Society.

⁴⁸ P. 202.

⁴⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 654.

formances were \$426, \$209 (rain), \$390.25, and \$340. Apropos of the last, Smith cries out, "This won't do!—A loss tonight of \$30—while *they* make \$170."⁵⁰ He evidently figured his expenses at \$200.

On Sunday, the Keans, in accordance with their agreement, did not play. So the theatre was turned over to the Ravel family, acrobats and pantomimists extraordinary, who brought \$553.25 into the box office, of which \$268 went to the managers. One can imagine Kean's emotions.⁵¹

Before retiring for the night on March 29, Smith made the following mournful entry in his daily journal: "Mrs. Kean very ill, but determined to act tonight. Her benefit yielded \$481.25. The result of the engagement (so far) of Mr. & Mrs. Kean, is this: The Keans receive in 7 nights \$1406. L. & S. receive above their expenses 0006!"

The next evening the receipts from *Ion* were down again to \$403. "Mrs. Kean ordered by her Physician not to act any more at present.—Unfortunate." On March 31 Kean himself took a benefit for \$195.75! At the same time he inserted in the program a notice to the effect that his wife, who had been "laboring under severe indisposition," could not appear and had been forbidden by her "medical adviser" to act again. Sensible of the distress of the partners, Kean offered to make a compensation for "necessarily cutting the engagement down to 7 nights," as Smith puts it in his book. The offer was declined. Nevertheless, he insisted upon returning \$100 of the proceeds of his disastrous benefit, because of his wife's absence.⁵² He also, according to Ludlow, played Don Felix in *The Wonder* when that comedy was given for Mrs. Farren.⁵³

After a rest of nearly three weeks, Mrs. Kean was, according to the Smith diary, pronounced well by her physician and made up her mind to resume her activities. But four days later, Smith had to make this final entry: "Mrs. Kean gives up, & returns to Europe—embarking from this port in the first vessel that sails."

In his biography of the tragedian, Cole makes this comment upon the tour.

⁵⁰ Diary of Sol Smith.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

⁵³ Ludlow, *op. cit.*, p. 654.

Throughout the Union their success was everywhere "prodigious." By the close of the first year they realized and sent safely home a greater profit than had ever before been accomplished on the same prolific ground within the same time.⁵⁴

Of the failure of *King John* he speaks with ill-concealed irony. "But our friends of the stars and stripes are utilitarians rather than antiquaries; more inclined to look in advance than to turn over the pages of the past, or to pore into ancient chronicles. . . . The upshot was that the expenditure far exceeded the return, and the produce of the second year bore no comparison with that of the first."⁵⁵

Back in England, the Keans took up where they had left off and resumed the London careers they had interrupted for the American tour. In 1848 they were chosen by Queen Victoria to supervise the command performances given before the Court at Windsor Castle every Christmas, an honor which must have gratified them enormously and which they continued to enjoy for ten years. They now attained the summit of their joint careers when in 1850, together with the comedian Robert Keeley, Kean assumed the management of the Princess's Theatre in London. There, during the decade which followed, he and his wife, Keeley having withdrawn in 1851, presented the most lavish and spectacular productions of Shakespeare's plays the world had ever seen, with the possible exception of the ill-fated New York performances of *King John*. Neither effort nor expense was spared. "In this little theatre," he said when the last curtain had fallen in 1859, "where £200 is considered a large receipt and £250 an extraordinary one, I expended in one season alone little short of £50,000. I have given employment, *i.e.* weekly payment, to nearly 550 persons, and £10,000 has been expended on improvements and enlargements."⁵⁶

That the venture increased the size of the nest egg he was laying away against the long-promised retirement is, I think, more than dubious. Yet, highly as he valued pounds, shillings, and pence, even this fact could not destroy his satisfaction. He had achieved glories never approached by his predecessors, and he was firmly convinced that at last, thanks to him, justice had

⁵⁴ Cole, *op. cit.*, I, 343.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 344.

⁵⁶ Sherson, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

been done to the world's supreme dramatist. Furthermore, he had won for himself a pre-eminence in British artistic and social life which to a man of his temperament was rich compensation for all his trials.

There were skeptics whose appraisals of his achievements did not correspond with his own. The viewpoint of such critics, which has become ours to-day, he was never able to understand, and he took all unfavorable comments as personal slights inspired by animosity. His classical training and a naturally meticulous mind had left him with a passion for archaeological exactness; indeed, it amounted to an obsession. Painstaking research among the treasures of the British Museum and days spent plowing through the reports of countless antiquaries resulted in a multiplicity of inconsequential details that we to-day find rather appalling. Nor was he satisfied with accomplishing these "improvements." He was resolved that they must be understood and appreciated as well as seen. Hence his printed programs were embellished with explanations of incredible length in which were cited, not only the minutiae of sets and costumes, but the authorities who vouched for their authenticity as well. Taking his archaeology so seriously, he was incensed when cavillers complained that he buried Shakespeare under avalanches of scenery and, because of the time consumed in changing his ponderous sets, omitted pages and pages of the text.

He prated much of the integrity of his text as spoken on his stage, and certainly nearly everything there spoken—except in *Richard III*—was Shakespeare, without alloy of inferior craftsmen; but so much of the original was not spoken that Kean was like a man who swore to speak the truth and nothing but the truth, blandly ignoring the fact that the *whole* truth was also required.⁵⁷

Yet what he accomplished did win general approval and served as a model for many successors, notably Sir Henry Irving. It is only within relatively recent years that there has been a complete abandonment of his practices.⁵⁸

His ideals and his purposes are clearly set forth in a letter he wrote on September 10, 1856, to Colonel C. B. Phipps, Keeper

⁵⁷ Odell, *Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving* (New York, 1920), II, 287.

⁵⁸ The author distinctly remembers an admirable performance of *Hamlet* by the Sothorn and Marlowe company about 1906 which started at 7:45 and ended about 12:15, and from which many scenes were omitted.

of the Privy Purse, with whom he had dealings in the staging of the Windsor theatricals.

. . . I have a much higher object in view than the mere *profit* which generally propels the managerial mind, for I cannot act in a commercial spirit—I seek reputation—I look for fame—I trust to establish a *name*, not as the mere reflection of a parent's genius, but as emanating from myself, as having achieved something by perseverance, zeal, and energy, towards the elevation of an art of which I am *proud*—and which I believe can, ought, and will be made a most valuable agent in national instruction. My opinion relates to the *future*, for the mark at which I aim, is, perhaps, *at present*, rather above the standard of the million,—although I have no reason to complain of their support, but, I *do* wish I could see more *real* sympathy—more co-operation with my views on the part of the higher classes.—It is true the Aristocracy visit the “Princess’s”,—and express their admiration at the *show*, but they come with a kind of vague curiosity, unaccompanied with that *respect* and *cordiality* of feeling, which, I think, ought to wait on a great object, and which ever appears to actuate their appreciation of *other* branches of art.—The Stage seems to be overlooked with comparative indifference, as an instrument of *good*—while, on the contrary, how warm is the enthusiasm and patronage lavished on intelligent Architects,—Sculptors,—and painters;—with an earnest desire to improve the minds of the people, lectures are even sometimes delivered by members of the Aristocracy, on utilitarian subjects;—I cannot, for my life, understand why a similar interest in the Drama—the *true Drama*—is not exhibited from the same influential quarters; and, that in an age presumed to be enlightened and educational, that old—and I may say—vulgar prejudices, are not cast aside, and the Theatre acknowledged—not simply as a vehicle for amusement—but, as the Temple of the combined arts.—The Stage might be rendered a most important machine, both in a political and social point of view:—no one, I presume, will deny how necessary it is to guide into a wholesome channel, the minds of the middle classes, who are especially operated upon by theatrical exhibitions.—If instruction can be blended with amusement, it surely must be advantageous and advisable, in due time, to use such influences for the benefit of the masses.⁵⁹

In recognition of his achievements Kean was given by his fellow-Etonians a testimonial banquet on July 20, 1859, as his final season at the Princess’s was nearing its conclusion. The meeting was presided over by the Duke of Newcastle and one of the speakers was William E. Gladstone, then Chancellor of the Exchequer. Both the guest of honor and his wife (who sat with other ladies in a balcony) heard themselves praised with the utmost enthusiasm and sincerity. He was lauded, not only

⁵⁹ Copies of this letter and of Phipps’ to which it was a reply are in the possession of the author.

as a great actor and producer, but as one of the great archaeologists of the day as well. The Duke also referred feelingly to an unusual feature of their management, "the affectionate care which has been taken of those who are engaged there."

They have watched over their interests; they have watched over their morality and their happiness. They have attended to their health; they have made the Princess's more like a great domestic establishment than a public institution in which people have no care for those who serve them provided they fulfil the duties they have to perform. I say, then, honour to them, and especial honour to Mrs. Kean in setting so bright an example. (Loud cheers.)⁶⁰

Perhaps had the Keans been as successful financially as they were artistically and morally, they could have retired to private life as they had long wished to do or, at least, talked of doing. But they were by this time so accustomed to moving in aristocratic and wealthy circles that they felt that they had to live on an appropriate scale of elegance. It was absolutely essential for the preservation of the prestige they both valued above almost everything else in the world. So retirement was for the present unthinkable.

Once more, therefore, their thoughts turned to America, and five months after his withdrawal from the Princess's, Kean wrote his old friend Smith to inquire about transatlantic prospects.⁶¹ "Old Sol" was no longer in the theatrical business, having retired in 1853, when, after eighteen years of inharmonious existence, the firm of Ludlow and Smith had been dissolved, and the junior partner, who had been admitted to the bar many years before, had turned to the law for a livelihood. In the spring of 1859 he had, with one of his sons, visited England and seen the Keans in *Henry V*, the last of their great revivals. Whether or not they had previously discussed the possibility of another American tour, I do not know, but Kean, despite the fact that his friend was now in a sense a layman, turned to him and enlisted his aid in the undertaking. To him in the corre-

⁶⁰ "A Theatre," wrote Kean to Phipps on March 11, 1852, "is an epitome of a kingdom. . . . A manager requires to be surrounded as far as it is possible by good and ready hearts, and it behoves him to root out the bad *spirits* whenever they are discovered." (Copy of the letter in the possession of the author.)

⁶¹ Charles Kean to Sol Smith, December 29, 1859. Letter in the possession of the Missouri Historical Society.

spondence which followed he entrusted all negotiations with American managers. These negotiations, unfortunately, did not begin auspiciously. American managers, forgetful of past history, were not at all eager to engage the services of the former favorites.⁶²

The stars were no longer young, and it was quite conceivable that the American public, unmindful of their eminence on the other side of the Atlantic, might not find them "attractive." Kean was forty-eight, his wife fifty-four. And neither one looked a day less, rather the reverse. Not in the best of health and aging prematurely, he had begun, as it were, to shrivel up, whereas she, fortified with more and more petticoats, was doing just the opposite. At home they had become veritable English institutions like Yorkshire puddings and Yule logs. No matter what they looked like, no matter what ridiculous figures they made in the youthful roles they persisted in playing, the British public still loyally flocked to see their performances. There was, however, not the slightest reason to take it for granted that American theatregoers, who had not laid eyes on them for more than a decade, would turn out in such numbers as to leave anything for the management after the Keans had been paid their inevitable clear halves. Prospects, therefore, were distinctly bad when, after months of ominous rumblings, the Civil War broke forth and put a period to all the plans.

Seeing nothing else to do, the Keans settled down to cultivating a little longer the familiar soil. According to their letters, the pounds were pouring into their waiting coffers. But these letters were partly camouflage. Had their income been as great as they wished American theatrical magnates to believe, they would assuredly not have embarked upon their next project. This was nothing less formidable than a tour of Australia. Only with the greatest possible reluctance can they have faced that undertaking, because it would entail, not only thousands of miles of travel, but also a long separation from their daughter, for they were convinced that she would be better off at home where she would have the benefits, social and intellectual, of London

⁶² Charles Kean to Sol Smith. Letters written throughout 1860 in the possession of the Missouri Historical Society.

society.⁶³ Nevertheless, so overwhelming was the desire to make more money than they thought they could accumulate at home that they decided they needs must go.

Consequently, on July 6, 1863, they set out for the antipodes, and reached Melbourne during the latter part of September. Mary was left at home. James Cathcart and George Everett, two of Kean's standbys at the Princess's, were taken along to assure the stars adequate support and also to relieve them of some of the inevitable burden.⁶⁴ Mrs. Kean's niece, "Miss E. Chapman," familiarly known as "Patty," went with them to play ingénue roles. It is possible that Mrs. Kean was accompanied by her personal maid, Jackson, but she is not mentioned in their correspondence during the Australian phase of the tour. Dr. Joy, who usually handled Kean's business affairs, was not included in the party.

However enjoyable their long voyage had been, once they landed in Australia, they did not find smooth sailing. They had been preceded there by the popular and talented Irish actor Barry Sullivan.⁶⁵ Apparently his friends looked upon them as hostile invaders and the Keans must have been chagrined to find themselves involved in a disagreeable popularity contest which led to very annoying newspaper publicity. "The advent of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean has been spoken of lately by the Melbourne Press in such a manner as to lead one to believe that it was quite a Victorian red letter day when they arrived. Whatever might have been their position at home, and however much a portion of the Press has heralded their advent, it is now quite clear the whole affair is a mistake. Even the *Melbourne Argus* 'damns them with faint praise.' *Punch* was right when he pictured the race for the championship with Barry Sullivan lead-

⁶³ Mary Maria Kean was born September 18, 1843. She was married in 1876 to Dr. Cosmo Gordon Logie, who died ten years later. She died January 4, 1898, leaving one son, Charles Harry Gordon Logie, who "is said to have died in his early twenties, unmarried, of consumption." [Giles Playfair, *Kean* (New York, 1939), "Pedigree of Kean."]

⁶⁴ Cathcart proved to be anything but the comfort expected. With Everett there seems to have been no trouble. He acted as Kean's stage manager during the latter's last year on the stage. (Charles Kean in letter to unidentified correspondent, Waterloo Hotel, Liverpool, May 26, 1867. Letter in possession of the Theatre Collection, Harvard College Library.)

⁶⁵ Thomas Barry Sullivan (1821-1891). After making a place for himself on the British stage, he had pushed on to America and now Australia, where he had arrived in 1861 and was, therefore, well established.

ing.”⁶⁶ Articles like this one in the Castlemaine *Mount Alexander Mail* must inevitably have dampened the spirits of two people as sensitive as the Keans.

In Melbourne they encountered an old friend, or perhaps more accurately, acquaintance. This was Joseph Jefferson, the already famous American comedian, who had played inconspicuous supporting roles while they had been with Ludlow and Smith nearly twenty years before and who was now filling a series of engagements in Australia. The episode is related by him in his *Autobiography*.⁶⁷ He first met Kean sitting dejectedly in St. Kilda Park, ruefully meditating upon what he considered the failure of the tour. It is significant that, although he was only fifty-two, he impressed Jefferson as a melancholy old man. I believe I can do no better than to introduce at this point the younger man's account of the old favorite's Australian debut. In a short paragraph it tells a great deal.

Old Londoners who remembered young Charles Kean and Ellen Tree in the springtime of their lives were charmed to think that they would not only renew their acquaintance with these celebrated artists, but could take their children to see the favorite actors who had delighted their fathers and mothers in days gone by. The Keans on their opening night were welcomed with great warmth; the audience rose from their seats and cheered them as they came upon the stage; old ladies and gentlemen waved their handkerchiefs and stood up to applaud their former favorites as though they would have said, "Welcome, welcome to our new home. Age has dimmed our eyes and wrinkled our brows, but, thank Heaven, it has not weakened our affection."

This was all very cheering, but in the face of actualities there had ensued an embarrassing subsidence of their fervor. Those Australians who were seeing them for the first time were seeing them, not through the rose-tinted glasses of sentiment, but as they were, and they could not rouse themselves to the expected raptures. This fact was not lost upon the visitors, and they were hurt, especially Kean himself. His wife and Jefferson, knowing that he was unwell, sought to persuade him that the coolness of his audience was but the creation of his imagination, but for once he was not deceived.

Yet still the old illusion refused to give up the ghost entirely.

⁶⁶ Robert M. Sillard, *Barry Sullivan and His Contemporaries* (London, 1901), II, 68.

⁶⁷ *The Autobiography of Joseph Jefferson* (New York, 1889), pp. 261-268.

From the Orient they were returning to America for the long-postponed farewell tour. As usual Kean was worried. He consulted Jefferson as an authority fresh from the scene. Should they not open in *The Gamester*?

Impulsively the young actor cried out, "By no means!" He then had to explain, and was compelled to admit that he believed, not only that *The Gamester* and *The Wife's Secret* were ready for the closet shelf, but that the Keans were a bit too mature to present themselves to a new generation in roles so unsuited to their years. Here again I turn to the *Autobiography*.

"And I believe you are quite right," said he; "but my wife will have it that we are as young and as beautiful as ever. I believe that she would act *Juliet* now if I were fool enough to play *Romeo* with her." And here he had another good laugh.

Back at the hotel, to Jefferson's tremendous embarrassment, the "old" actor repeated this conversation to his wife with his own embellishments. "My dear," he announced, "Mr. Jefferson thinks that it is high time for two such old fools as you and I to give up playing young parts and go into characters whose antiquity will be more suited to our dilapidated appearance." This exaggeration amused him, and he went out on the balcony to enjoy his cigar. "During his absence," Jefferson writes, "her cheerful manner altered, and it was plain to me that she had taken in the situation of their engagement more clearly than he had, for she said to me, with tears in her eyes, 'Thank you for keeping up his spirits; he needs it.'"⁸⁸ But they clung to *The Gamester* to the very end.

On July 9, 1864, they sailed for California, which they probably felt was at a safe distance from the Civil War now drawing to a close. They reached San Francisco in time to open at Maguire's Opera House on October 8, putting up while there at the Occidental Hotel. They then at last inaugurated their actual farewell tour of the United States, a tour which was to prove financially profitable, but otherwise one of the most unhappy experiences of their long careers.

When the Keans reached this country, they were tired. Furthermore, whether they knew it or not, his health was fail-

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 267-268.

ing, and she had been painfully ill in Australia.⁶⁹ They had, moreover, undergone experiences which must inevitably have told upon their nerves. Under the circumstances it was natural that they were querulous and hypersensitive. They were in no mood to make allowances. The crude manners of many of the rough-and-ready Americans they encountered in California and Vancouver got under their skins, and they were ever on the look-out for slights. Nor can it be denied that they had grown snobbish. At home and in Australia they had been lionized by the élite; except in a few American cities they seem to have been for the most part socially ignored. Accustomed as they were to being accepted as among the mighty, they found what seemed to them like pointed neglect, very like *lèse-majesté*. Moreover, they encountered much anti-British sentiment, a result of Civil War controversies and of Fenian agitation. Finally, the War had left the Americans also in a nervous frame of mind. The visitors apparently forgot that no people can emerge from so terrible an experience in a placid condition. Altogether, they were in no mood to enjoy their last visit to the United States.

Their four months' stay in California was interrupted by a brief, but to them refreshing trip to Vancouver Island. Their spirits were sorely in need of this relief. To add to their other woes, James Cathcart was proving to be anything but a comfort and a support. He had taken to drinking, and Ellen Kean had been compelled to nurse him through an attack of delirium tremens on board ship. And Kean had other worries. He was tormented, too, by uncertainty concerning his future course of action. George Coppin, his Australian manager, who had accompanied him to America en route to England and was supposed to be handling his business affairs, was now urging his employer to proceed forthwith to New York, but the situation was no more encouraging than it had been before the War. No one in the Eastern states was demonstrating the slightest interest in the farewell tour—all feelers had been ignored—and Kean dreaded taking the risk.⁷⁰ Whether Coppin was finally

⁶⁹ Ellen Kean to "My darling Mary" from Prince of Wales Hotel, St. Kilda, no date. "It is a painful tedious affair and a very *expensive* one—but Gods will be done." Letter in the possession of the author.

⁷⁰ Charles Kean to Mr. Coppin, January 23, 1865. Kean's copy in the possession of the author.

able to secure some commitments or he succeeded in persuading the actor to take a chance, the correspondence extant does not reveal, but to New York the party did go, stopping off en route to give readings in Panama and Jamaica, and reaching their destination in the early spring of 1865.

No account of the Keans and their final American tour could be complete without a quotation from the memoirs of Clara Morris, the later renowned emotional actress, who was a member of the stock company at Columbus, Ohio, and supported them during their engagement in that city. There is no space here to quote Miss Morris' encomiums upon Ellen Kean's playing of Queen Katherine in *Henry VIII*. Suffice it to say that in her opinion it was a great and moving performance. I draw merely upon her description of the couple themselves.

That was the last visit to this country of Mr. and Mrs. Kean, and his memory was failing him grievously. He had with him two English actors, each of whom knew every line of all his parts, and their duty was, when on the stage or off, so long as Mr. Kean was before the house, to keep their eyes on him, and at the first sign of hesitancy on his part one of them gave him the needed word. Once or twice, when he seemed quite bewildered, Mr. Cathcart, turning his back on the audience, spoke Mr. Kean's entire speech, imitating his nasal tones to the life.

But it was off the stage that the ancient couple were most delightful. Ellen and Charles were like a pair of old, old love-birds—a little dull of eye, nor quite perfect in the preening of their somewhat rumpled plumage, but billing and cooing with all the persistency and satisfaction of their first caging. Their appearance upon the street provoked amusement—sometimes even excitement. I often saw drivers of drays and wagons pull up their horses and stop in the crowded street to stare at them as they made their way to the theatre. Mrs. Kean lived inside of the most astonishing hoop woman ever carried. Its size, its weight, its tilting power were awful. Entrances had to be cleared of all chairs or tables to accommodate Mrs. Kean's hoop. People scrambled or slid sideways about her on the stage, swearing mentally all the time, or a sudden gasp from the front row or a groan from Mr. Cathcart announced a tilt and a revelation of heelless slippers and dead-white stockings. . . . The Kean bonnet was the wonder of the town. It was a large coal-scuttle of white leghorn and at the back there was a sort of flounce of ribbon which she called her "bonnet-cape"; draped over it, she wore a great bright-green barege veil. But she was not half so funny as was her husband on the street. His short little person buttoned up tightly in a regular bottle-green "Mantellini" sort of overcoat, loaded with frogs of heavy cord, and lined, cuffed, and collared with fur of such remarkable color, quality, and marking as would have puzzled the most experienced student of natural history to name. . . .

As they came down the street together, Mrs. Kean, majestically towering over her lord and master, looked like an old-time frigate with every inch of canvas spread, while at her side Charles puffed and fretted like a small tug.⁷¹

Just after their arrival in New York, Fate intervened to cause them further trouble. President Lincoln was assassinated by an actor. In the resulting confusion, they, like other members of their profession, knew not where they stood; yet they went ahead with their plans, and on April 26, when the theatres reopened, they began their season at the Broadway Theatre in a condensed version of *Henry VIII*, stopping at the fall of Wolsey (the final exit of Kean), and *The Jealous Wife*, in which they must have been rather absurd. Professor Odell has discovered that the tables were turned, that it was now Mrs. Kean who was received with unenthusiastic courtesy, and her husband who drew the plaudits, being hailed as one of the great tragedians of the day. He notes the absence of the patronizing tone in which Kean's performances had been discussed in what was supposed to be his heyday. Incredible as it may seem, "the very mature Mrs. Kean elected to play the Fool" to her husband's *Lear*.⁷²

For the financial results of this engagement, Professor Odell turns to T. Allston Brown and his *A History of the New York Stage*. The latter asserts that "the seats were sold at auction, first choice being purchased by James H. Hackett," the well-known actor. "One hundred and eighty-nine seats in all, and two private boxes were thus disposed of, to an aggregate of \$3,546.50. . . . The receipts of the opening performance were \$1,921.54. The largest house was on the 'Hamlet' night, when the receipts were \$2,053.05. The total receipts of the eleven performances aggregated \$17,554.39. Mr. Wood's share was \$8,777.19. So triumphed the Keans." \$8,777.19 is half of \$17,554.39. So it was clear halves again. The Keans did triumph.⁷³

As has been said above, the tour as a whole did not continue to be either so prosperous or so flattering. It lasted until mid-April, 1866, when they finally sailed away from America, never

⁷¹ Clara Morris, *Life on the Stage* (New York, 1901), pp. 164-165.

⁷² Odell, *Annals*, VII, 650-651. The appearances in *King Lear* were made later. *Ibid.*, VIII, 29.

⁷³ T. Allston Brown, *A History of the New York Stage* (New York, 1903), I, 513.

to return. Nor, it must be said, had they the slightest wish to return. They had travelled up and down the West Coast, and back and forth over the eastern half of the country, taking in, perhaps in addition to other cities, San Francisco, Portland, probably Virginia City, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, St. Louis, Chicago, Milwaukee, Detroit, Cleveland, Nashville, Louisville, Memphis, New Orleans, Mobile, Albany, and Boston. They had had many misadventures and humiliations. They had, they were convinced (probably with justice), been cheated of money to which they were entitled. His health was declining, and they were all exhausted, homesick, and irritable.

After all their hard work and all the inconveniences and deprivations to which they had subjected themselves in order to accumulate a competency upon which to retire and spend their last years in domestic tranquillity, this consummation was denied them. According to his friend and associate, Fred Belton, he was suffering from diabetes;⁷⁴ and he had also a serious heart condition.⁷⁵ At fifty-five he was a worn-out old man. During the year which followed he continued to act, but with increasing difficulty. On May 28, 1867, he made in Liverpool in his great role of Louis XI his last appearance on the stage. After months of lingering he died on January 22, 1868, at his home in Queensborough Terrace, Chelsea.

Ellen Kean was desolated by his death. For nearly thirty years her life had revolved about his, and almost her every thought had been dedicated to his welfare and the gratification of his slightest whim. Belton asserts that he left her, as well as their daughter and their niece, well provided for.⁷⁶ But within a few years she seems to have found herself at times without the means to meet her wants. From a letter to Patty Chapman it would seem that she was not on the best of terms with her daughter.

I am not well my dear and I am most unhappy—I shall soon be free of every little debt and if I could only settle on you £100 a year I should pray

⁷⁴ Fred Belton, *Random Recollections of an Old Actor* (London, 1880), p. 230.

⁷⁵ Dobell's Catalogue of Autograph Letters &c., No. 66, June, 1927, lists "a Doctor's Certificate, signed by H. W. Mainfold, Surgeon, 29 May, 1867," stating that Kean was suffering from a serious affection of the heart.

⁷⁶ Belton, *op. cit.*, p. 233.

God to take me to rest in peace—My use is over—I am only in the way now. I know *you* love me in your old wild strong way I know you are *genuine* if not very sympathetic—and I do think Cosmo appreciates and believes in my motherly devotion—I *do think so*—These are my sole bits of comfort. . . .⁷⁷

She lived in retirement until her death in London, August 21, 1880.

If, when he forbade his son the stage, Edmund Kean was actuated by fear that another of the name might eclipse his glory, his fears were groundless. Despite the maudlin raptures of his biographer, John William Cole, Charles Kean, if acting ability be the criterion, was never more than a star of the second magnitude.

A vivid description of his appearance is given by the actor John Coleman.

As to Kean's *personnel*, his face was merely redeemed from being positively ugly by the splendour of his eyes. His head was large and covered with a thatch of very coarse straight black hair, which he wore very long. His brow was majestic and imposing. His mouth and chin were firm and well cut; but his nose was of so irregular an order that I really do not know how to describe it. Although his figure scarcely approached the middle height, it was so muscular, so symmetrical, and so admirably balanced that one ceased to wonder at his being captain of his crew at Eton. His neck was like a pillar of ivory, his chest was broad and expansive, his waist slender, while his legs—well, they were more elegant than sturdy, with perhaps a slight suspicion of the parallelogram inherited from his father.

Coleman goes on to quote Mrs. Kean on the subject.

When my Charlie was a boy, he was the ugliest lad I ever met; but I could never see his ugly face for his beautiful gig lamps of eyes." To which he responded, "And I could never see yours, Delly, because of your beautiful dose."⁷⁸

His voice wanted strength and beauty. He suffered from recurring attacks of bronchitis which wrought permanent injury to his throat. His pronunciation has been called "vicious,"

⁷⁷ Ellen Kean to Patty Chapman, Oct. 31, no year given. Letter in the possession of the author. Dr. Cosmo Gordon Logie (1820?-1886) was Mrs. Kean's son-in-law, having married Mary Maria Kean on February 23, 1876.

⁷⁸ John Coleman, *Fifty Years of an Actor's Life* (London, 1904), I, 188-189.

no doubt because of his difficulties with certain consonants. Ellen Terry records that he always called Mrs. Kean "Delly."⁷⁹ And *Punch* ironically thanked him for his antiquarian revelations concerning the dietary habits of the mediaeval Jews, declaring that he made Shylock cry out to the Duke of Venice,

. You take my life
When you do take the *beans* whereby I live.⁸⁰

Yet Miss Terry pronounced his elocution beautiful. "His voice was also of a wonderful quality—soft and low, yet distinct and clear as a bell. When he played Richard II the magical charm of this organ was enough to keep the house spellbound." In contradiction of this opinion (which must have been based on girlhood memories), we have that of George Henry Lewes. "It [his voice] is harsh and rasping; so, indeed, was the voice of his father in its upper range (though less so), but in its lower range it was marvellously musical, and had tones of a searching pathos never heard since. Partly because of the voice which is inflexible, but mainly because of an insensibility to rhythmic modulation, Charles Kean cannot deliver a passage with musical effect."⁸¹ There is no one living to-day who can arbitrate between these two authorities.

The verdict upon the merit of an actor's work must of necessity be subjective; it can never be final. An evidence of this fact is to be found in the disagreement between two such competent authorities as Lewes and Miss Terry. In seeking to appraise the art of Charles Kean, the student to-day must end up somewhere between the unblushing eulogies of Cole and the venomous ridicule of personal enemies like Douglas Jerrold.⁸² The truth almost certainly is that as an interpreter of the tragic heroes of Shakespeare, he fell short of greatness, but that in less sublime melodramatic roles such as Delavigne's Louis XI he was both unapproachable and unforgettable. In comedy he was beyond a doubt successful, whether the play was by Shakespeare or by somebody else. "Who can act Benedick?" queried *The Galaxy* in 1868, a month after his death. "Charles Kean,

⁷⁹ *Ellen Terry's Memoirs* (New York, 1932), p. 13.

⁸⁰ *Macready and Forrest; and Their Contemporaries*, p. 99.

⁸¹ George Henry Lewes, *On Actors and the Art of Acting* (New York, 1880), p. 26.

⁸² Douglas Jerrold (1803-1857), author of popular plays and contributor to *Punch*. His best known play is *Black Eyed Susan*.

a shrivelled old man of sixty [actually fifty-seven], who looked no more like *Benedick* than a dried herring, gave us by sheer art the best *Benedick* of many a year."⁸³

One of the most interesting analyses of his acting is given us by Dutton Cook.

His voice was strong, however; he was capable of feats of rapid enunciation, and he could indulge at times in a sort of passionate vociferousness that was highly effective if it occasionally degenerated into rant. . . . He was far happier in his delivery of short sentences, sharp questions, or stinging replies. His face, plain of feature, was immobile of expression, although his heavy-lidded eyes were bright and penetrating. He was versed in all stage accomplishments, was adroit of attitude, fenced well, gesticulated with address, making good use of his small and shapely hands. An air of refinement attended him, and for all his lack of comeliness he always wore the look of a gentleman. . . . Perhaps the main secret of his success lay in his earnestness of manner and his incisiveness of delivery, seconded by his special power of self-control. He had learnt the value of repose in acting, of repressing all excitement of attitude and gesture, and he imported into modern tragedy a sort of drawing-room air little known upon the English stage before his time.⁸⁴

This restraint had not always been characteristic of his work, asserts Lewes.

He began by being a very bad actor; he has ended by forcing even such of his critics as have least sympathy with him to admit that in certain parts he is without a rival on our stage. . . . His career is a lesson. It shows what can and what cannot be done by courageous devotion and a burning desire to learn the resources of an art. The stamping, spluttering, ranting, tricky actor, who in his 'sallet days' excited so much mirth and so much blame, has become remarkable for the naturalness and forcible quietness with which he plays certain parts. He is still unhappily given to rant when he has to express strong emotion; but rant is the resource of incompetence in all actors of tragic characters; and it is only on occasions of excitement that he falls into this mistake. On other occasions he is calm and forcible.⁸⁵

One of the greatest handicaps from which he suffered throughout his life was his inability to accept adverse criticism, at least of his professional efforts. Herman Vezin, one of his associates on the stage, records that he did admit quite readily that he was not the equal of his father—"There are no Keans nowadays. I mean *Edmund Keans*," he once said to his friend—but that,

⁸³ *Macready and Forrest; and Their Contemporaries*, p. 107.

⁸⁴ Cook, *op. cit.*, II, 252 ff.

⁸⁵ Lewes, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-23.

apparently, was as far as he would go.⁸⁶ So great was his "infantile vanity," as it has been termed, that any qualification of the most unrestrained panegyric or any failure to recognize his pre-eminence seldom failed to offend or anger him. Early evidence of this weakness is found in a letter written him, it would seem, at the very beginning of his career by one of his Eton friends, possibly one of his tutors. This letter, which is addressed to "Kean, Esqur. Junr., Drury Lane Theatre, London" and dated "Tuesday 2nd," is signed "J. Bayley."⁸⁷ Inasmuch as Kean made his debut at Drury Lane on Monday, October 1, it seems probable in view of the contents that it was written the following day. It is, moreover, known that the very unflattering reviews in some of the newspapers excited and upset both Kean and his mother. On the other hand, the letter may have followed one of the young actor's subsequent discouraging receptions.

. . . . Every one, on becoming a public character, must make up his mind to become the subject of public discussion. This consideration should have its proper weight among others that induced you to quit the private path of life. You have already achieved much by last Night's display, but you are far from having past the Rubicon if you expose so vulnerable a part to every contemptible foe. No one could read the *Times* paragraph without discovering a spirit of ill nature breathe thro' every part of it. I have just seen the *Morning Chronicle*, which contains a much more dispassionate critique. You have studied your profession with great effect; but you are aware that much remains to be done. . . . You have, as I before told you, only to persevere; not suffering yourself to be too much elated with applause or dispirited by censure; but to pursue diligently & steadily the path which you have chosen. For if your bosom reverberates with every flitting breath of praise or blame, you will exhaust over trifles that strength which should be kept for better purposes.⁸⁸

The same note is sounded in a letter written him by his wife in 1863, when he was over fifty years of age.

My dearest love. Nancy's letter this morning has made me very uneasy. I am sorry that you are upset just at the end of your time and I am sure (although she does not say so) that some *unlucky talk* has done it. Now I

⁸⁶ *Macready and Forrest; and Their Contemporaries*, p. 106.

⁸⁷ The identity of this man has not been established. He refers to himself as a clergyman, and, according to Mr. R. A. Austen-Leigh, an authority upon Etonian antiquities, especially in the early nineteenth century, he may have been the Reverend John Bayley, a graduate of Cambridge, who was ordained priest in 1815.

⁸⁸ Letter in the possession of the author.

can scold at a distance because you *must read* my mind although you *won't hear it*. Your *health*, your *life*, your *happiness*, the *prosperity and little fortune you aim at*, all depend on your abstaining from disagreeable and galling topics. If you were told that drinking weak Brandy and water would bring on delirium tremens you would think it quite disgraceful to persist in drinking it and thus continually lay yourself up by such weak and wicked imprudence, *but* you have no scruple about pouring *mental* alcohol into your poor overworked brain which is I believe every bit as mischievous as the liquor. Now do be a *man*—and make up your mind to always *drop* a dangerous subject—You know to dwell upon it kills you for a time and where after all is the exquisite pleasure even for the time being. Think of me, think of Mary, and of the happy tranquil hours in store for us all if you will only cast over past annoyances. Get all the money you can in the next three years—and then we will go to Italy and you shall bask in the sun and “rail at fortune in good sad terms” Now I have done my preach. *Be a good boy.* . . .⁸⁹

The explanation of Kean's hypersensitivity lies in the province of the psychiatrist. It would, however, seem more than likely that it lay, at least in part, in the consciousness of his irregular origin and, perhaps, in a certain subconscious lack of confidence in his own powers. Edmund Kean was the illegitimate son of a disreputable young man of the same name and a young girl named Ann Carey who “called herself, delicately enough, an itinerant actress and street hawker,” but who “had the natural instincts, if not the commercial acumen, of an ordinary prostitute.”⁹⁰ In his life of Edmund Kean, Giles Playfair quotes an article in *Notes and Queries* by someone describing himself as an old schoolfellow and friend of Charles, to the effect that his father was never sure which of two women was his mother. “But the truth appears to be that Ann Carey was his real mother, and that Miss Tidswell was his aunt.”⁹¹ The writer claimed that in preparing his article he had used notes supplied by the younger Kean himself. The truth Charles seems never to have blinked, perhaps because he knew that to do so would have been futile. But he was a man of intense pride and was to a pronounced degree what we to-day call “socially-minded.” Ever since his days at Eton he had moved among the aristocracy and he regarded the upper classes as his own people. To a man of such

⁸⁹ This is a portion of a long letter continued from day to day in April, 1863, chiefly about Fanny Kemble's readings. This particular portion is dated “Thursday 9th.” The letter is in the possession of the author.

⁹⁰ Giles Playfair, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 329. *Notes and Queries* 6, VIII, 235.

a temperament moving in such circles the facts of his birth must have been galling in the extreme. It is quite possible that herein lies the explanation of the lordly tone he often adopted in his correspondence despite a naturally warm and sympathetic heart.

Charles Kean was not only an actor; he was also a business man, a shrewd and in the end a successful one. Fred Belton states that he was "an immense man of business, and never missed a day or an opportunity of making money."⁹² Yet he was also a man of no little generosity. He supported numerous pensioners, including many of his wife's relatives, and responded readily to pleas for assistance. All in all, if not a great man, he was in his day at least an important one and so recognized by his contemporaries. And in the long list of memorable English actors his name commands a respected place.

Both physically and artistically (at least until the last years of his life) Ellen Kean loomed larger than her husband. This fact, we may be sure, she took great care that he should not suspect. According to Coleman, even when "approaching maturity," she was in appearance decidedly pleasing. "A well-shaped head was covered with a profusion of light brown hair; delicately pencilled eyebrows surmounted large beautiful hazel eyes; while her well-cut ruddy lips set off to advantage two rows of dazzling white teeth; and, to crown all, her smile was sunshine and her voice music."⁹³ While a young woman she wore her hair in many ringlets; in later life, after she had lost her maidenly figure, she parted it in the middle and plastered it down severely on either side of her forehead.

"Of imagination in its highest sense," according to the *Dictionary of National Biography*, she was deficient, but she had genuine humour and provocative mirth. Westland Marston declares that 'in sympathetic emotion, as distinguished from stern and turbulent passion, no feminine artist of the time surpassed her.'⁹⁴ As she grew older, she acquired greater tragic power; although she, it would seem, employed histrionic methods now long since abandoned, acting definitely for "points," there can be no question that she was able to give exceptionally moving

⁹² *Op. cit.*, p. 230.

⁹³ *Op. cit.*, I, 188.

⁹⁴ *D. N. B.*, XXX, 265.

performances. As evidence of this, we have the testimony of two of the most gifted actresses who followed her upon the stage, one English and one American, Ellen Terry and Clara Morris.

Miss Terry, who received her early training while a juvenile member of the Princess's company, fortunately recorded in some detail her impressions of both her employers.

What he owed to Mrs. Kean he would have been the first to confess. In many ways she was the leading spirit in the theatre; at least, a joint ruler, not a queen-consort. During the rehearsals Mr. Kean used to sit in the stalls with a loud-voiced dinner-bell by his side, and when anything went wrong on the stage, he would ring it ferociously, and everything would come to a stop, until Mrs. Kean, who always sat on the stage, had set right what was wrong. She was more formidable than beautiful to look at, but her wonderful fire and genius were none the less impressive because she wore a white handkerchief around her head and had a very beaky nose. How I admired and loved and feared her! Later on the fear was replaced by gratitude, for no woman ever gave herself more trouble to train a young actress than did Mrs. Kean.

One more quotation from the same source:

When I think of the costume in which she played Hermione, it seems marvellous to me that she could have produced the impression she did. . . . No matter what character Mrs. Kean was assuming, she always used to wear her hair drawn flat over her forehead and twisted round her ears in a kind of circular sweep. . . . and then the amount of petticoats she wore! Even as Hermione she was always bunched out by layer upon layer of petticoats, in defiance of the fact that classical parts should not be dressed in a superfluity of raiment. But if the petticoats were full of starch, the voice was full of pathos, and the dignity, simplicity, and womanliness of Mrs. Charles Kean's Hermione could not have been marred by a far more grotesque costume.⁹⁵

Miss Terry recognized that she had been fortunate in receiving her early training from this stern, but experienced, preceptor. For Ellen knew her business, and she knew it thoroughly, from the bottom up, not superficially. Furthermore, she respected it so much that, not only was she willing to work herself unsparingly for its sake, but, what was perhaps more unusual, she was able to appraise the work of others when it was serious even when she did not like them personally. One of her contemporaries of whom she disapproved was Fanny Kemble. They had had no contact with each other after their girlhood when they acted together, and in the meantime Fanny had been mar-

⁹⁵ *Ellen Terry's Memoirs*, pp. 13-14.

ried and divorced. Ellen Kean did not like "disobedient wives." Of the real reasons underlying the Butler divorce she probably knew little or nothing, but it was Fanny, not Pierce Butler, of whom she expressed disapproval. Yet her professional performances she could criticize impartially. She might be shocked, but not too much so to be able to recognize artistic merit.

In the spring of 1863 Fanny Kemble was back in London giving a series of her celebrated Shakespearean readings, and her former Romeo took her daughter to hear two of them. Charles Kean was out of town, and she wrote him accounts of what she had seen and heard.

Monday night 11 o'clock⁹⁶

I write my impressions to night lest I should forget anything—Fanny Kemble reads finely—*there is no mistake about it.*⁹⁷ You know I always thought her *handsome*. She is looking very well. She is grown *large*—with a *tremendous bust*. She wore a high white silk dress and her fine head was quite plain. Her lustrous eyes pearly teeth, and melodious voice give her a *great charm*. She must have been on her good behavior for she made a very low curtesy on entering and retiring. She was exceedingly nervous—and commenced in a low modest tone "I shall have the honor of reading, As you like it" She soon warmed and read both Orlando and Adam beautifully—She looked so like her Father at times that I found the tears in my eyes at the recollection of the fine old man.⁹⁸ She read Touchstone *very well*—Audrey was certainly an imitation of Mrs. Keeley⁹⁹ and told well—she could not do better. She read the banished Duke admirably and *portions* of Jaques *exceedingly well* especially "A Fool, a fool, I met a fool i' the forest" and the Lords speech upon the deer. She did not *name the characters* as she read them—or *very seldom*. And I was right in my conjecture about

⁹⁶ This is part of a letter written from day to day. That it and its sequel were written in 1863 there can be no doubt. The years during this period in which April 8 fell on Wednesday were 1857, 1863, and 1868. In the spring of 1857 Fanny Kemble was in America. By April, 1868, Kean was dead. Consequently, 1863 is the only year possible.

⁹⁷ After separating from her husband in 1845, Fanny Kemble found herself under the necessity of earning her own living. This she at first did by returning to the stage. Although she was successful, her old distaste for acting persevered, and she gave it up to undertake the public reading of Shakespeare's plays. She was received with great enthusiasm and continued to appear in this manner until 1869. In 1863 she was fifty-three years old.

⁹⁸ Charles Kemble (1775-1854), father of Fanny Kemble, and brother of John Philip Kemble and Mrs. Siddons. He was a finished interpreter of such roles as Laertes, Mercutio, and Charles Surface. For a time he managed Covent Garden. After his retirement from the stage, he was appointed Examiner of Plays.

⁹⁹ Mrs. Robert Keeley (1806-1899), the wife of Kean's former partner. Her maiden name was Mary Anne Goward. As an actress, she enjoyed for many years very great popularity and also the esteem of all who knew her. She had played Audrey at Drury Lane under the management of Macready.

the differences being kept up in *all* the characters Oliver and Orlando and Adam were *all very different* and this told very finely in the onset but when it came to *Duke Frederick*—and *Oliver*—and *Amiens*—and the *Lord* and *Jaques du Bois*—the distinctiveness of character dropped. I do not tell you this as any palpable fault in her reading but to show you that such distinction *cannot* be kept up in all subordinate characters throughout a Play read by one person. "Blow blow thou winter wind" was *exquisite*—and yet with all this admiration there is something grating to me in a woman reading all the men and straining her voice at times into a manly tone—but she read the *men best*. I thought least of her *Rosalind* and *Celia*. This might be in part from preconceived notions—but I thought there was scarcely sentiment enough about her *Rosalind*—She tried to be too funny. It was a little pert.¹⁰⁰ She cut the play admirably—and gave a portion of the Epilogue. She is not particular about the introduction of a word or two to make her points. The room is small she read in, but *was full*. . . . Mary was much struck and liked the reading much. The company there was *good* but not aristocratic—and no end of *old maids*—The people were attentive—She kept them in her grasp—I do not think it possible for a woman to read comic male characters in Shakespeare and avoid a tinge of vulgarity or coarseness. She out with *proper names*—but she cut out grossness very neatly. On the whole trying to look at it as an indifferent person I would certainly go again and again to hear her read. *Most* certainly I would hear her in every Play once, and I fancy I shall like her infinitely better in an entirely serious Play—but I believe myself that she would rather read *Touchstone* than *Hamlet*. I think her inclination goes with the comedy. She is really very handsome—and *I like to look at her*. Tuesday morning.—*More reflections* I think at times Fanny was a shade *slow*—but she made me think that perhaps we were a shade *quick*. *Her pauses were "tre-menduous"*—but *mostly effective*—her enunciation is *remarkable*—However faint her tone—however she may dwell on a word, the final consonant comes at last *clear* however beautifully.

Wednesday
night
April 8

My dearest Charlie

We are just home from the "Merry Wives"—and certainly it is a *wonderful exhibition*. It is *monstrous clever*, but *shocking* I think to see a *woman* (a *gentlewoman*) so coarsely unsex herself¹⁰¹—and *I* feel this the more,

¹⁰⁰ A writer in *The Galaxy*, 1868, expresses the opinion that *Rosalind* "is among the most charming of Mrs. Kemble's impersonations."

¹⁰¹ This was also the opinion of Mrs. Kemble's American friend, Henry Lee, who states in an article in the *Atlantic Monthly* (May, 1893) that it was, like her reading of *Caliban*, Bottom, Sir Toby Belch, and Dogberry, "disagreeable and unsuccessful." On the other hand, Henry Austin Clapp in his *Reminiscences of a Dramatic Critic* (Boston and New York, 1902), expresses great admiration for her interpretation. "I vividly recall the occasion when I listened to her delivery of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and was one of an audience which laughed itself almost faint over her

when I hear the melodious tones of her natural voice in "sweet Anne Page"—Her Mrs. Quickly is marvellously good—There is a breadth of character and a humour in it that is delicious—I remember having heard of her saying as a girl that of all Shakespeares women she would like to play Mrs. Quickly. She takes to it handily and it is a great performance Her Falstaff I think is good I think for any one (*reading*)—wonderful for a woman—but it made me almost angry that she did it so well. It is *too gross*—it was to me painful—but *very clever*. Shallow anything or *nothing* Slender elaborate but not very good—Dr. Caius *excellent* Ford so, so—very fair. Mrs. Ford and Mrs. Page merry cheerful pleasant souls—Anne—*very sweet*—and Fenton charming. I've wondered (after hearing her in Falstaff) where the sweet gentle womanly tones came from. She showed age more to night and did not look so handsome. How could she? Yet when she came to the parts where the Merry Wives were alone the pretty expression on her face made her look young again Mary perfectly agrees with me that it was wonderfully clever, but *disgusting*—The room was not more than half full and *not many Ladies*—She does not name the characters and if I did not know the Plays so well I should get rather bothered—Still it keeps the spirit of the Play up by avoiding *those checks*. I was not in the least wearied—I did not see a single soul I knew. There was very little applause but the people enjoyed it—She was dressed as before—It was over by ½ past nine. To me her doing Falstaff was as bad as a woman going on for Clown in a Pantomime—It is such a *coarse unsexing*.

Although Ellen Kean was not another Sarah Siddons and although she lacked the grandeur of Helen Faucit and the power of Charlotte Cushman, she was an actress of no common gifts. No doubt part of the esteem in which she was generally held was born of the warmth of her personality and the appeal of her smile. In her own day she occupied a position of flattering eminence, which seems never as in her husband's case to have turned her head. Long after she had withdrawn to private life and, indeed, after her death, her influence lived on in the work of the young actresses she had trained, Agnes Robertson, Ellen and Kate Terry, and others, less celebrated, whose names have long since been forgotten.

Many of the things for which the Keans stood and for which they battled seem to us to-day mistaken, but in their own time they were a force and a power, and their aims and ideals, as well as their achievements, merit consideration in the history of the English and American stages.

interpretation of Falstaff. A middle-aged Englishwoman, in usual afternoon costume, read from an ungarnished platform, out of the big book which had come down to her from her aunt, Mrs. Siddons!" He found her reading far more effective than the stage performance of Beerbohm Tree. (P. 178.)

CHARLES KEAN TO MORRIS¹

Richmond Eagle Hotel
Oct. 13th, 1830

Dear Morris, Pray do not stand on etiquette but write to me often. Do not construe my not answering your last letter into neglect, but really from occupation and illness was I prevented.

If you knew how much gratification I derived from your letters, I am convinced you would write to me often.—I have concluded a most triumphant engagement at the Arch St. Theatre, Philadelphia, & am re-engaged for January next at fifty pounds per night. This is a melancholy hole, & I am literally dying of Blue-devils. I confine myself to a private room, & dine alone, for at the public table they are a set of Goths and Vandals. It is positively a fact, on the first day of my arrival, dinner was concluded in *ten* minutes.

The Theatre holds when crowded to excess about \$600, the people are completely governed by the weather, having to mount almost a perpendicular hill unprotected by houses, a wet night causes empty benches. Monday was a very bad day & I opened to \$300. My second appearance is tonight & it is pouring as if a second deluge was about to take place. I open in Baltimore Monday, Oct. 25th & conclude Nov. 8 & shall then proceed immediately to N. York. I am told on account of the numerous private parties, my second engagement with you will not be so lucrative. Will that be the case? The good people of Baltimore I understand are by no means theatrically disposed, I shall have to contend also with the French company. Nov. 22d I commence in Boston & about Dec. 12 will take place my New York re-engagement. I *may* perform three or four nights hoping thru to Boston, or I shall remain idle.

How have the houses been at the Park? Does Forrest attract and Mrs. Austin.² Have you seen Colonel Berkeley. How does the Bowery.

¹ Letter in the possession of Mr. Maynard Morris. Addressed to "Morris, Esq. Mirror Office, New York."

² Mrs. Austin, who in the surmise of Professor Odell was "the greatest woman singer New York had yet heard, Malibran alone excepted," had made her debut in that city on January 2, 1828. (Odell, *Annals*, III, 309.)

Remember me to Graham to whom I will write in a day or two, I have written three or four letters today & am fatigued Adieu, adieu, Remember me

Your sincere friend,

Charles John Kean.

Write by return, & tell Graham to do the same, I have no amusement but your consolatory letters.

II

CHARLES KEAN TO WILLIAM DUFFY³

Bankers Hotel N York

Oct 15th 1832

Dear Sir

Would you be kind enough to acquaint me the precise characters you wish me to play at the Arch, that I need not bring more dresses than requisite. What am I to open with on Monday night, something that does not require much voice, for being so many months on the shelf I shall feel the effects. *Shylock* or Sir E. *Mortimer* or *Sir Giles*—Hamlet, Bertram, K John, Richard 3rd, Reuben Glenroy, Hotspur, Posthumous.⁴ Select from these & let me know by return of post. I shall be in Philadelphia Saturday night,

Yours truly

Charles Kean

³ Letter addressed to "Duffy Esqu/Arch St Theatre/Philadelphia," in the possession of the Theatre Collection, Harvard College Library. William Duffy was at this time a member of the firm of Jones, Forrest, and Duffy, which was operating the Arch Street Theatre in Philadelphia.

⁴ Sir Edward Mortimer in Colman's *The Iron Chest*, Sir Giles Overreach in Massinger's *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, Bertram in Maturin's melodrama of the same name, and Reuben Glenroy in Morton's *Town and Country*.



Ellen Tree

(Courtesy of the Theatre Collection, Harvard College Library)

III

ELLEN TREE TO SOL SMITH⁵

New York
October 21st
[1837]

Dear Sir:

Extreme illness has for some time confined me to my bed or you would have heard from me before this—I *shall* travel *southward* this winter and shall be most happy to visit Mobile. I can do so about the beginning of February and my terms will be to share on the stock nights of my engagement after one hundred dollars and a clear half of the benefit.

I am Sir
Yours sincerely
Ellen Tree

IV

ELLEN TREE TO SOL SMITH

Mobile
Monday Jany 8th
[1838]⁶

My dear Sir:

I have never been in the habit of acting for any stipulated sum nor should I like to do so now—such arrangements often prove unsatisfactory either to the Manager or the Actor. I am sorry you think the terms I have named so unreasonable—In

⁵ This letter is addressed to Sol Smith. Cf. Introduction, note 21. The year is almost certainly 1837 because on October 16 she returned to the New York stage after a protracted absence, and a marginal note scribbled probably by either Ludlow or Smith ties in with the next letter. It says: "Ansd. Novr. 16—offered her from 25th Jany to 3d Feby—divide after \$300 & half Benefit,—or \$1000 for the 9 nights, & we have the entire control & profit of the Engt. The selection of pieces to be made from an extensive list furnished by herself."

All letters addressed to Sol Smith are included in the Sol Smith Collection which is the property of the Missouri Historical Society in St. Louis. All others, except when especially noted, are in the possession of the author.

⁶ 1838 was the only year within this period when January 8 fell on Monday.

proposing to share on the stock nights after \$150 I have already made a reduction of \$50 per night—If on consideration you feel you cannot meet this proposal, I can only regret that I shall not have the pleasure of making my curtesy to a Mobile audience.

I am Sir

Yours most sincerely

Ellen Tree

V

ELLEN TREE TO SOL SMITH

Buffalo

Sunday July 22d [1838]

My dear Sir

I promised to write you as soon as I had arranged my plans for the winter. I shall begin at the St. Charles immediately after Christmas and act sixteen successive nights *excluding the Sundays*. I should like to begin with you immediately after at Mobile—and act five nights and a Benefit on the same terms as last year, and if you think it advisable an immediate re-engagement, but you must settle that point one way or the other as my onward business will be directed by your decision. Reserve the "*Lady of Lyons*" and "*Woman's Wit*" for me I particularly stipulate for these plays.⁷ I have gone to great expense for them and expect that you will let me have the first of them I have been very ill since I left St. Louis and am ordered by my Doctor to take rest—as my malady is occasioned by over fatigue. I did intend to visit the Virginia Springs, but the distance is more than I feel equal to. Therefore I shall pay a short visit to Canada and then stop at the Avon Springs in the New York state—I mean to rest all September and get up my strength

⁷ *The Lady of Lyons* by Edward Bulwer-Lytton, one of the most popular romantic dramas of the nineteenth century. Pauline was a favorite role with all actresses. *Woman's Wit* or *Love's Disguises*, one of the less known comedies of James Sheridan Knowles.

for my southern trip. I shall return to England next June. Any letters addressed to me 9 *Murry Street New York* will be immediately forwarded.

Make my compliments to Mrs. Smith^s and Mr. and Mrs. Ludlow

And believe me

Sincerely yours

Ellen Tree

VI

ELLEN TREE TO SOL SMITH

Natchez

March 16th [1839]

My dear Sir

I finish in Vicksburg on the 2nd of April and shall start for St. Louis the next morning if a boat runs. If all happens fortunately I can begin in St. Louis on the 9th of April—as they tell me it takes just six days to make the passage. If you announce me as coming—a short notice will serve for the premier night—I wish to begin as soon as possible as I want (if *possible again*) to act in Louisville and Cincinnati on my return to New York where I must be before the end of May. I should like to open in the *Hunchback*.⁹

Yours very sincerely

Ellen Tree

^s Martha Mathews Smith, first wife of Sol Smith. For many years she was an actress and shared many of her husband's adventures. But when her family grew large, she retired from the stage. She died June 4, 1838.

⁹ Dramatic romance by James Sheridan Knowles. The role of Julia vied in popularity with that of Pauline in *The Lady of Lyons*.

VII

ELLEN TREE TO SOL SMITH

Natchez
Sunday April 7
[1839]

My dear Sir

I leave Natchez for St. Louis on Wednesday next. You will know when to announce me—put me up for anything you think will be best. You know my feelings are anything but poetical on the subject.

I write in haste

Yours very truly
Ellen Tree

VIII

CHARLES KEAN TO JOHN HUGHES¹⁰

My dear Hughes,

This letter will convey to you the mortifying intelligence that I am unable to fulfill my engagement here from ill health, and that instead of a triumphant commencement of my American campaign, I am confined within the walls of a sick chamber.

My voice has totally left me, and very serious apprehensions are entertained of a speedy recovery—Let the public know that it is *ill health* which prevents my acting, & let no absurd stories about failure be circulated by Price and his gang¹¹—I have written Edmund Robins an account of this unfortunate circumstance, enclosing some extracts from the New York papers—Ask him to show them to you, as well as my letter. Of course I shall make very light of this matter to my mother, but you may convey to every body else the full extent of my present situation. It will be a serious pecuniary loss, and if I am not

¹⁰ Letter addressed to "John Hughes Esqr/5 Tavistock Row/Covent Garden/London" in the possession of the Theatre Collection, Harvard College Library. Hughes, I cannot identify positively. The elder Kean had a crony called "Jack" Hughes. But I doubt if this was he.

¹¹ Stephen Price, who had launched Kean on his career, was now co-manager of the Park Theatre, New York.

H. H. Anthony
London April 9

My dear Sir

My dear Sir,
I leave sketching for St. Louis on Wednesday
next - You will know when to announce
me - put me up for anything you think
will be best - You know my feelings are
anything but friendly upon the subject
I write in haste

from being truly

Allen Lane

able to act for another month know not what I shall do—Patience is a virtue, and God knows I need it now—for having no-body to care for, or care for me, on this side of the Atlantic, does not increase the pleasure of my solitary hours—Hoping in a few weeks to be able to send you improved accounts of my health, and with kindest regards to Madam & the babies believe me, Yours most sincerely

Charles Kean

New York

Sept. 20 1839

P. S.

The British Queen is just coming up the river.

IX

CHARLES KEAN TO JOHN HUGHES¹²

Boston—November 15th, 1839

My dear Hughes,

I find I have a few minutes to write a word to you & thank you for your kind attention—The *musick* arrived quite safely—I have enclosed to Edmund Robins a few extracts from newspapers, requesting him to employ them for me to some purpose, you will of course see them, and let my mother have them when they have been *sufficiently useful*. I concluded an excellent engagement at the little Theatre last Friday, and the House was the most brilliant of the season, both as to numbers and fashion—and so great is the excitement I have left behind that I really believe if the old Theatre stood, I should have cleared *thousands*.¹³ As it is, we must make the best of a bad bargain—Would to God I had remained at home, for as it is, I dare not return before May, as the ill natured world would say my ex-

¹² Letter in the possession of the Theatre Collection, Harvard College Library.

¹³ The National Theatre in New York, under the management of James W. Wallack, was burned to the ground on the afternoon of September 23. Kean, who had played there earlier in the month, was to have returned that evening as Richard III. Wallack lost no time and on October 1 he opened "the National Theatre, Broadway, adjoining Niblo's Gardens." (Odell, *Annals*, IV, 336.) It is to the latter building Kean refers as "the little Theatre."

pectations have not been realized, yet my success has been, and is far far beyond any body else.

The Park is going to ruin, and no doubt now exists but that the new National will be built in Broadway by next August—I shall not be *here* to see it.

I have enclosed some verses from a newspaper to Robins—and am particularly anxious they should be copied with a few remarks into the *Morning Post*. After which to be transferred into any or all other papers—I am doing well here, but my spirits are so low, every thing being so different from home, that I have no enjoyment, save the anticipation of *return*¹⁴—My love to your wife, & believe me

Ever yours sincerely

Charles Kean

X

CHARLES KEAN TO BENJAMIN WEBSTER¹⁵

Baltimore, April 11th 1840

My dear Sir,

I have just arrived from the Havana, where I have been for the recovery of my health, and lose not a moment in acquainting you with my speedy return to England, as I have engaged

¹⁴ Kean's frame of mind appears to have qualified the success of his American engagement. Professor Odell quotes the *Knickerbocker Magazine* for June, 1840, to the effect that audiences persisted in applying to him the standards set by his father and applauding only when he imitated the latter. "There was at times an apparent carelessness in his acting, and before full houses too, for which it is difficult to account. Perhaps, being aware of this unfair system of criticizing his performances, and knowing that it was impossible for him to come up at once to the high standard by which he was to be measured, he lost heart, and did not even make those fair exertions, which, when made, would only be spoken of as being so many grades below those of the great original." (*Ibid.*, IV, 357.)

¹⁵ Benjamin Nottingham Webster (1797-1882), English actor, manager, and playwright. At various times he managed the Haymarket, Adelphi, Princess's, and St. James Theatres. Both the Kears were members of his company at the Haymarket before and after their marriage. He was the father of Ben Webster, the actor, and the grandfather of Margaret Webster, the actress and directress. Letter in the possession of the Theatre Collection, Harvard College Library.

my passage by the Steamer on the 9th of next month, which will probably land me in Bristol on the 24th or 25th May. Let me beg you will take advantage of this to underline me in your bills *immediately* as being engaged for a *limited number of nights* at your Theatre, & that on the arrival of the Great Western my first appearance will be regularly announced, provided however that the theatrical reports which have reached me are without foundation. I do not place much reliance in such rumours, but must confess myself rather surprised by hearing from *so many quarters* that Mr. Macready is engaged at the Haymarket at the same time with me, either to act on my off nights, or as some indeed venture to say—*with me*. I need hardly add that I know the latter report to be false, as it could not be done without my consent, nor is it very likely that the other plan could be adopted, as Mr. Macready would not be very likely to accept the Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday in the opera season to my Monday, Wednesday and Friday.¹⁶ Such an arrangement could only be attended with disagreeable results, and only tend to encourage the bitter feelings already existing in some portions of the *press*. My professional object ever has been and still remains, to gain a reputation in a *few* particular characters, and only to appear in London when those parts and those only, may be considered attractive with me. If with these I am worth my price, well and good,—if not, I can always retire to the Provinces with some advantage, or at any rate cease my *professional labours altogether*. Before I conclude this, let me remind you of your promise to produce *Hamlet* and *Richard* with new scenery and dresses, and in the hope that

¹⁶ Macready evidently did agree to act on the evenings Kean thought he would disdain. His engagement at the Haymarket opened on Monday, March 16, but on Saturday, April 11, he appeared as Richelieu; on Saturday, April 25, as Claude Melnotte; on Tuesday, May 5, as Hamlet; and on Saturday, May 23, as Halbert Macdonald in Talfourd's *Glencoe*. His diary mentions no further appearances until after the close of Kean's engagement. [*Macready's Reminiscences and Selections from His Diaries and Letters*, edited by Sir Frederick Pollock (New York, 1875), pp. 466-468.] "On the 1st of June, 1840, Charles Kean commenced his second engagement at the Haymarket, which continued for thirty nights. *Hamlet*, as usual, was his opening part, followed by *Richard*, *Shylock*, and *Sir Giles Overreach*. On Monday, the 6th of July, he added *Macbeth* for the first time, to his list of London characters." (Cole, *op. cit.*, I, 312.)

you will not find the labourer unworthy of his hire, believe me with every good wish for your deserved prosperity.

I remain

Very truly yours

Charles Kean

P. S.

I have only just heard of poor Hughes death—I cannot tell you how it shocked me. Pray remember me most kindly to your brother, and do not cast me into hot water on my return, or I shall quit you and the stage altogether for a year or two, for a very slight excuse would make me shake off all these cares & troubles for a time at least. Once more farewell, and God prosper you—

XI

CHARLES KEAN TO EDWARD MORAN¹⁷

Manchester—Albion Hotel

Monday—

Nov. 23rd, 1840—

My dear Moran,

I have just recd. your letter and am very grateful to you for so kindly remembering me. My friend of the Manchester Guardian has *ever* been so severe as you mention, but there is one great comfort, and which under the circumstances heals the wound he inflicts—namely *that though I am not a first rate actor, I receive a first rate salary!* Now there are many in his opinion & also I dare say in the opinion of many others far better actors than I am, but they don't get paid & don't attract the multitude. Now in spite of my friend's opinion I do both, & probably I shall go on doing so till I finally make my bow to him & all the rest of the playgoers! Bad or good, my dear Moran, I can boast of receiving more money in one year than ever was received by a British actor or actress, not excepting my father or Miss O'Neill, & they may hit as hard as they like

¹⁷ Letter addressed to "E. Moran Esqr/Globe Newspaper Office/Strand/London," in the possession of the Theatre Collection, Harvard College Library.

provided they don't hurt me.¹⁸ If not giving you too much trouble, would you write to your friends in Dublin, as I always dread presenting a letter, where something is expected to rise from it. It looks so like "Will you be so kind, Sir, as to come and see me act, & say then how good it is" You will understand my feelings & therefore I will say no more, than that I am *intimately* acquainted with Creighton of 21 Pemberton St to whom you have referred me. I cross the Channell on Thursday night. Happiness attend you and

Believe me

We are doing
excellently well here!

Most truly yours

Charles Kean

XII

CHARLES KEAN TO EDWARD MORAN¹⁹

Exeter—11 Feby. 1841

My dear Moran

Would you once more oblige me by giving my name a *leetle* corner where you may give the most *positive contradiction* to the report of my marriage with Miss Ellen Tree—which I have read in the Courier & sundry other papers. I assure you I have not had the honor & never shall. Some *very* good natured friend has taken the trouble to cut out, I think from the *Age*, an article, regretting that so charming a woman should unite herself to the "murderer of Shakespeare," and sent it to *me*. His feelings may be relieved, for I am not married & the assassin is very well paid for his murders.

You will be glad to hear that my success continues unabated, & with all the abuse heaped upon my unfortunate head, I shall

¹⁸ Eliza O'Neill (1791-1872), an Irish actress who during a brief career on the stage enjoyed enormous popularity and was even favorably compared to Mrs. Siddons. "During her short professional career she accumulated £30,000, which at her marriage she settled upon her family, which had always been dependent upon her." [Henry Barton Baker, *English Actors from Shakespeare to Macready* (New York, 1879), II, 247.] Upon her marriage to William Wrixon Becher (later a baronet) in 1819, she retired from the stage.

¹⁹ Letter addressed to "Ed Moran Esqr/ Globe Newspaper Office/ Strand/ London" and postmarked "Exeter/FE 12/1841," in the possession of the Theatre Collection, Harvard College Library.

receive more this year than any actor that *ever* trod the British stage, not excepting my father. I mean from 1st August 1840 to August 41. Send me a Globe to Plymouth where I commence next week, & believe me ever sincerely and gratefully

Yours

Charles Kean

P. S.

I return to Bath 1st March for my *third* engagement & then proceed to Edinburgh & Glasgow. 17 May I begin again at the Haymarket.

XIII

CHARLES KEAN TO BUCHANAN²⁰

My dear Buchanan

Of course you have seen the announcement of my marriage with Ellen Tree in the London papers—well for once they are right! *I am married*—I married last Saturday in Dublin in as quiet a way possible, with the intention of keeping it concealed until the close of my Haymarket engagement, but its premature discovery opened my mothers eyes, & now I have no reason for longer hiding it from the world—To *you* I dare say this seems *strange* and *sudden*. *Eight* years since I was *engaged* to this lady for two years, & circumstances partly of a pecuniary nature & aided by both mothers severed the link. During our separation she has clung to me with a *devotion*, for I can call it by no other name, that is read of, but seldom found, & feeling her truth & sincerity, combined with her high principle & honor, I determined not to cast from me a heart, from silly and frivolous reasons, whose equal I could never find again. Few women could understand *me*, & even understanding would bear with my strange disposition. As it is, I have found *one*, who appears as if made by Heaven for the purpose. Again my dear fellow I am now past one & thirty years of age, & I began to find the dazzle of society, becoming dim, & having been surfeited with

²⁰ I have not been able to identify this Buchanan.

the excitement of such life, I am not only willing but anxious to exchange for something more solid & real—I have found it—

You will ask me naturally enough about circumstances when I was last in Edinburgh—All that was at an end soon after I left you—I discovered things respecting the family that made me very unhappy & uncomfortable & soon after an affair arose, that gave me an opportunity of relinquishing all my claim without a shadow of dishonor & thank God I was rescued from a precipice, & saved from *ruin* for that would have been the “end all & the be all.”²¹

Now you are authorised to announce my marriage, & I should wish you to express a hope that we should act together at my approaching engagement in Edinburgh, & also say that you understand it has been a *long attachment*.

When you know my *wife*, I am confident you will approve my choice, & feel that I have taken a step which must insure happiness. My poor dear Mother has behaved like a heroine & indeed every thing looks bright. With our united exertions in a very few years we shall be perfectly independent for as it is we start with nearly £30,000 between us—

And now my dear Buchanan God bless you & yours & believe me, married or single, ever

Your sincere friend

Charles Kean

Bath, 5 Feby 1842

I start for *Plymouth* tomorrow where I remain till Monday 14. My *Edinburgh engagement begins on Monday 7th March and Glasgow on the 28th Feby.*

²¹ “It is stated that Ellen Tree had been in love with Charles Kean for many years. There was a story to the effect that he once aspired to marry Miss Angela Burdett Coutts (afterwards the Baroness), who refused him, of course. He was a very conceited man and had not expected a refusal. Arriving at the theatre at Dublin one night, he said to Ellen Tree: ‘Ellen, if you wish to marry me, to-morrow or never!’ And ‘to-morrow’ it was, for they were married the very next day and played together the same night in Tobin’s ‘Honeymoon.’” (Sherson, *op. cit.*, p. 140.)

XIV

CHARLES KEAN TO LUDLOW AND SMITH

Gentlemen

I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated June 14th & to assure you that it would give me great pleasure once again to visit a city to which Mrs. Kean and myself are indebted for so much kindness, but for the present I am sorry we must decline your offer.²² I am in the receipt of a very large income at home, and from the pecuniary success that has attended me in my profession for the last eight or nine years, I am contemplating my final retirement & consequently have just purchased an estate in Hampshire. In addition to which I am almost daily expecting another tie to our Home but believe me gentlemen that although I can make no promise, I shall cherish the hope of again visiting the United States, before my quitting the stage altogether.

I remain

Very truly yours

Charles Kean

London

119 Park St.

Grosvenor Squ.

26 July 1843

XV

CHARLES KEAN TO SOL SMITH

Dear Sir,—

Since I heard from you some months since, my attention has been earnestly directed towards America, not on my own account, but on that of Mrs. Kean, who in a year or two, will quit the stage altogether.

²² Mrs. Kean had, of course, as Ellen Tree visited St. Louis more than once, but, although Kean himself had played Natchez and New Orleans, I have been able to discover no reference to any appearance in St. Louis. Certainly there is none in the memoirs of Ludlow and Smith. Nor have I come across any in the local newspapers.

to leave our Home, family, & all
domestic happiness, together with
the certainly of income in this
Country, without a guarantee
of one half the clear receipts
in every Theatre we visited.

Such arrangements being made
for us by you in all the Southern
& Western Theatres we should
visit previous to our coming
out - our engagements being
already made up to the
middle of next year, we
could not sail for New

Page from letter of Charles Kean to Sol Smith
(1 April 1845)

(Courtesy of the Missouri Historical Society)

Her desire is very great to make a *farewell* visit to the United States & I am induced to believe from her popularity as Ellen Tree & the many private invitations she has received since her marriage, that a visit of "*final adieu*" would be attended with great success.

We could not however be induced to leave our *Home*, family, & all domestic happiness, together with the *certainty* of income in this country, without a guarantee of *one half the clear receipts in every Theatre we visited*. Such arrangements being made for us by you in all Southern & Western Theatres we should visit *previous* to our coming out.

Our engagements being already made up to the middle of next year, we could not sail for New York before August 1846 & our visit to New Orleans would therefore be about the middle of February 1847.

Your answer will greatly oblige

Yours truly

Charles Kean

1 April 1845

My address is Keydell near Horndean—Hampshire, England

XVI

ELLEN KEAN TO SOL SMITH

Isle of Jersey

June 13 [1845]

My dear Sir

Mr. Kean has received your letter dated April 30th and we conclude that you have got his—the two letters having crossed on the road. ("On the sea" would have been more exact.) It is very strange that the day we received *your* letter—we got one also from Mr. Simpson (who is now in London) making us an offer for *this Autumn 1845*.²³

I have for a long time been working Mr. Kean up to a trip across the Atlantic but *this year* was never a part of my con-

²³ Edmund Shaw Simpson (1784-1848), manager of the Park Theatre, New York.

templation. Mr. Simpson has however pointed out how and why a visit this year would be so much more advantageous than next and if Mr. Kean can get free from England by postponing engagements he has already made why I have no doubt but that Simpson and I shall come to a conclusion—for we always understand each other very well—I have taken it *utterly out of Mr. Kean's hands*—I tell him this is *my* trip—he knows nothing about it, and I shall assume the reins of government in our trans Atlantic undertakings. So write to *me* and *listen to me*. If we can get rid of our ties here in England we shall be happy to visit *New Orleans—Mobile—and St. Louis*—the engagements occupying *40 acting nights* (minus the *Sundays*) commencing March 1st and concluding about the middle of May—but for the advantage of all parties I stipulate that no other male or female acts our Plays for at least a month previous to our engagement. I suffered from this in many instances last visit—never with *you*—for I always found you too good a Politician—but it is just as well to remind you—You know well that even very mediocre talent can take from the freshness of an after good engagement without benefitting any part—a good card is worth playing carefully—and many a good one may be thrown away for *want* of a little care—I was a *Queen* of Trumps when I was with you before—I am a better Actress now and I bring a *King* with me—

I understand Macready had half the House everywhere throughout the states and I think we are entitled to equally good terms—We receive the highest terms given everywhere in England and I have been obliged to hold up large inducements to my Lord and Master to tempt him to leave his Mother, his child and our pretty estate in Hampshire—Let me hear from you—address—Mrs. Charles Kean—Keydell—Horndean—Hants

I send this to St. Louis. I hope it will find you there.

Yours very sincerely

Ellen Kean

Give my best compliments to Mr. Ludlow and family. I hope Mrs. Smith and all your children are well.

XVII

CHARLES KEAN TO SOL SMITH

My dear Sir,

We have recd. a visit from Mr. Chippendale on your account offering us terms which of course are out of the question.²⁴ I had imagined that you were fully aware that our terms were clear halves every night. To prevent any further delay, as our time is too precious, & the distance too great to be spent in letters of negotiation, I wish you clearly to understand that I cannot deviate *one iota* from the terms I have already stated. Our prospects are too brilliant in the North to warrant our travelling further South than Charleston, unless we receive every possible advantage. Be good enough therefore to make up your mind *at once*, as I cannot delay making our final arrangements for our American visit beyond the receipt of your answer to this.

I remain

Yours truly

Charles Kean

P. S. If we are to visit you, we can begin in New Orleans *about* the middle of February—taking Mobile & finishing with you in St. Louis

Astor House, New York
25 August 1845

²⁴ William Henry Chippendale, English character actor brought to this country by Stephen Price in 1836. He remained until 1853. On his return to England he was connected with the Haymarket Theatre, London, for twenty years. He played Polonius to the following Hamlets among others: Edmund Kean, Charles Kemble, Charles Young, Macready, Junius Brutus Booth, Forrest, Charles Kean, Barry Sullivan, and Irving. [C. E. Pascoe, *Dramatic List, A Record of the Performances of Living Actors and Actresses of the British Stage* (London, 1880), pp. 94-96.] He joined the Ludlow and Smith company at Mobile in November, 1845. (Ludlow, *op. cit.*, p. 619.) During the season of 1848-1849 he played old men and was stage manager for the same firm, then occupying the St. Charles Theatre, New Orleans. (Sol Smith, *Theatrical Management for Thirty Years*, p. 210.)

XVIII

CHARLES KEAN TO W. H. CHIPPENDALE

[New York]

My dear Mr. Chippendale,

If Messrs. Smith & Ludlow would offer me half the receipts after *one dollar per night* ! ! ! I would not accept them.

To tell you the truth I cannot keep this negotiation open any longer, for Mr. Forbes of Charleston is waiting my decision as to dates with him, and I must give him my answer before I quit Town. I am not at all anxious about the South, as I feel pretty confident of our success in the North.

Mr. Forbes is coming to me to-morrow, & I must give him my final answer.²⁵ Should I not hear from you in the mean time, I must resign all thought of N. Orleans &

Yours very truly

Charles Kean

Friday [August 29?]

XIX

CHARLES KEAN TO W. H. CHIPPENDALE

Philadelphia 19th Sept. 1845

My dear Mr. Chippendale,

It is too late! After our interview at the Park Theatre, when you read me the letter from the management of the New Orleans circuit, I made my arrangements for the winter & spring, which now preclude the possibility of our going South at all—

I should have answered your letter yesterday, but was wearied out by a long rehearsal. We are doing *great* business—

Yours truly

Charles Kean

²⁵ W. C. Forbes. [William Stanley Hoole, "Two Famous Theatres of the Old South," *South Atlantic Quarterly* (July, 1937), p. 277.]

Philadelphia 19th Sept. 1845

My dear Mr. Whipple

It is too late! After our
interview at the Park Theatre when
you read me the letter from the
management of the New Orleans
Circuit, I made my arrangements
for the winter & spring, which
now preclude the possibility of our
going South at all -

I should have answered your
letter yesterday, but was wearied
by a long rehearsal. We are
doing great business. Yours truly
Charles Keane -

XX

ELLEN KEAN TO SOL SMITH

Philadelphia

Sunday 20th²⁶

My dear Mr. Smith

I have this morning received by the mail packet *Britania* the very kind letter addressed to me by yourself and Mr. Ludlow. I imagine from the tone of your letter you will be disappointed at our not visiting you. Why, oh why did you dally so long? I made Mr. Kean keep off from other arrangements untill that *very conclusive* letter was received by Mr. Chippendale. Yet perhaps it is all for the best—for if as you say you cannot *afford* to give half the Houses it is unwise to offer it—and on the other hand it really is not worth our while to visit the South on any other terms—we have better engagements waiting us *at home* to say nothing of the brilliant carreer we are running in the North—You say you would rather give thirds and halves to Mr. and Mrs. Kean seperately. Mr. Kean himself *alone does not act* and *has not for the last nine years acted anywhere under half the Houses*—with the exception of *Dublin* which holds \$1600 and there he shares after \$100—He made no addition to his terms when I accompanied him as his wife—Why should he then in this country act on smaller terms than he can get at *Home*? business is business and you know very well people do not cross the Atlantic—leave parents and child at such a sacrifice!

But it is *too late*—Managers were here waiting to swallow us up—and everybody saying we should be mad to leave such good fortune—Yet I am sorry for I should have liked to have seen my many Friends—As to its not paying you—It pays managers in England and I do not doubt it would pay you. It is not because the last speculation failed that we are not to pay—I do not boast when I say proudly we draw the money we receive everywhere and leave as much behind—

We bring out *Romeo and Juliet* at the Park next Thursday

²⁶ Ellen Kean obviously got her dates mixed. This letter was written from Philadelphia in September, 1845, as the context clearly shows. But Sunday came on the twenty-first, not the twentieth.

fortnight—It had a long run at the Haymarket with Mr. Kean and myself just after I left this country—"Much Ado" has been the great hit of the engagement both in New York and here—There is a universal cry for "Ion" and I have written out for dresses—We bring out a New Play *The Wife's Secret—our own property*—by the author of "Love's Sacrifice" [George Lovell] in December at the Park. Give my kindest regards to Mr. Ludlow and his family and Believe me

Very sincerely yours

Ellen Kean

They have created a place for us in Boston where we act November 17.

XXI

CHARLES KEAN TO SOL SMITH

My dear Sir,

Circumstances will oblige me to return home sooner than I intended. In fact we must be in England before Xmas 1846, so we will come to you this season, if you are still open to receive us. Our engagement concludes with Mr. Forbes in Charleston & Savannah the last day of February & we will then proceed direct to New Orleans.

We will make the engagement for forty nights, to commence at New Orleans, & the forty nights to be divided between your three towns of New Orleans, Mobile & St. Louis—

Write to me by return of post & direct Tremont House, Boston, Mass.

Yours truly

Charles Kean

Philadelphia

October 30th 1845

P. S. If you can still receive us, we will endeavour to get rid of the Savannah engagement altogether, so as to be a week earlier with you. Answer my letter *decidedly*—Yes or No!

Recd. Nov. 18. Ansd. Yes!

XXII

CHARLES KEAN TO SOL SMITH

Philadelphia

3 Jan'y 1846

My dear Sir,

I think it right to let you know that we are obliged to be in New York to fulfil an engagement commencing on 18th May, so that we shall of necessity be obliged to conclude with you at St. Louis on or about 1st May.

I should suggest we play three weeks at New Orleans commencing 2nd March. (We *might* perchance open a few nights before this, if the ground is not occupied) Mobile on the 23rd for 10 or 11 nights—New Orleans again on 6th April for a week & St. Louis on the 20th April

I am now sorry we are coming to you this year, for we are doing so *brilliantly* in the North, which may induce us to give you two years instead of one. It is a pity to leave success in its high tide. The whole of the Dress Circle is gone for our opening night at the *Park* next Wednesday 7th & on the 26th we begin in Charleston, S. C. where we should be glad to receive a letter from you.

Yours truly
Charles Kean

XXIII

ELLEN KEAN TO SOL SMITH

Cincinnati
Monday morning
½ past 7 o Clock²⁷

My dear Mr. Smith

Here we are no farther than Cincinnati now—We have broken our wheel three times very badly and arrived here Sunday morning at seven oClock with one wheel. They sent for six car-

²⁷ Postmarked "May 18." This is almost certainly 1846. The Keans had finished their St. Louis season on May 11, and did not return there for nearly twenty years.

penters who were at work all day yesterday—and who are at work *still*—We expect to get off at about twelve o Clock to day. We are most unfortunate in our fellow passengers who with a very few exceptions are like a set of very dirty emigrants. We have about five and twenty children twenty of whom are between the ages of one and four years. So you may imagine the squalling we have. The weather has been very close and we cannot boast of the privacy of our state rooms for these people bring chairs and stick their backs right into our doors & in my long experience in this or other lands I never met with such a dirty uncouth set—The boat and servants are well enough and with a decent set of passengers we could be very comfortable. Some of the poor children are in dirty rags without shoes or stockings. There is one Kentucky woman I should like to whip. She *locked up* her two little dirty urchins in her state room last evening and went on shore for *hours*—So that if there had been a *Fire* or any other accident what would have become of those little creatures. She is out again this morning and her Baby is shrieking itself into convulsions. It sets me wild. Pity the sorrows of your suffering stars!

With kind remembrances to all

Believe me yours sincerely

Ellen Kean

XXIV

CHARLES KEAN TO SOL SMITH

My dear Mr. Smith

My *wife insists* upon my writing to you without further delay to let you know that our interest points exclusively to the *North* for the coming season & therefore we must postpone another Southern tour until the following year—We shall however be happy to meet you at St. Louis (time & circumstances agreeing) next *Spring*, & if such an arrangement can be carried out, we could then settle on a date for New Orleans & Mobile—

I should not like to meet you at St. Louis later than the middle of May, or at any rate about the 20th of that month, & then only on condition that we are in a position that enables us to

proceed afterwards to Louisville & Cincinnati. Mr. Thorne, I believe, has Theatres now in both those cities & *you* can tell me whether they are such places as we could visit!²⁸

Anderson and Forrest are both, I understand, positively coming out, so you will have enough tragedy in the South without our aid, & our attraction the following year may perhaps be increased by the fact of our "farewell."²⁹ We are on a visit in the interior of the State, away from all society, & hard at work studying for our next campaign—

On 13th August we commence in Buffalo for 4 nights & open in New York on the 31st August—Pray remember us to Mr. Ludlow, & with our kindest regards to yourself & family

I remain, truly yours,

Charles Kean

15 July, 1846

XXV

ELLEN KEAN TO CHARLES SMITH

New York

October 9th [1846]

My dear Mr. Smith—

We have received your letter containing one from Mr. Bates which by your request I return to you—I am sorry he is so determined as I should have liked to have taken leave of St. Louis which now seems to be an impossibility for nothing less than \$4000 could compensate us for so long a journey, and there appear to be no other Towns to make up for the loss of Louisville and Cincinnati. Can you suggest anything to make it

²⁸ James Thorne, who with James Scott had formerly operated the National Theatre, had died at sea in 1843, a fact which obviously was unknown to Kean. (Ludlow, *op. cit.*, p. 558.)

²⁹ James R. Anderson, tragedian born in Edinburgh. For a time he supported Macready. He paid four visits to the United States, one of them from 1846 to 1848. "In his prime he was the best Claude Melnotte, Petruchio, and Don Felix I ever saw; and his Hamlet, Othello, and Shylock held their own beside the very best." He was, moreover, a remarkably handsome man. (Coleman, *op. cit.*, I, 281.)

practicable. If there were a second Theatre in Cincinnati or Louisville or both to which you could take a small company to get through some light things as to *numbers*—or if there is anybody would open such Theatres whom you would have us trust—we would go to them for the sake of my taking my *final* leave. It being my last visit to the country I wish to say Adieu in every city in which I have been kindly received. Mr. Bates talks an “infinite deal of *nothing*”³⁰—What has the Lady being turned from a Lodging house to do with our engagement. As to his account of Mr. Burton’s arrangement the thing speaks for itself.³¹ How could we *make three thousand Dollars* and he lose *one*—the same sum taken by him [in] so short a space of time must have been a great gain to him—At any rate Mr. Kean for certain reasons did not wish to return to Mr. Burton and was threatened with a Law suit if he did not—and *that* does not look as if he had lost by us. Let me hear from you whether anything is practicable for we will not close up our time untill you say that nothing can be done.

There is a Mr. Leonard just arrived in this country who acts Irishmen—he came under unfortunate circumstances—was en-

³⁰ James Bates, son and assistant of John Bates, who operated theatres in several mid-western cities. His letter (now in the possession of the Missouri Historical Society) is a lengthy, rambling, and at times pointless effusion. He grows very passionate upon the subject of stars and their greed, and declares grandiloquently that he will not pay half houses to any person or persons. “I am not going to place myself in the power of *Stars* by being forced into measures by them through any *public feeling* that might be gotten up through the Press or otherwise. As matters now stand I can see very plainly that both Managers and Actors are working entirely for the benefit of *Stars* to the ruin of the first and the Starvation of the latter. . . . It was only a short time since that two Ladies belonging to my company, after having engaged Rooms in a Boarding House in Louisville were turned out to seek shelter elsewhere on account of their belonging to the Theatre, the reason being given that they had boarded Actors before and would board no more. . . . This I look upon as an insult to the profession, and I for one am determined that a similar occurrence shall not happen to any of my people, by suffering the *imposition* of thirds and halves from Stars for I know that were I to give such terms, it would be but a short time before my shops would be closed by the *officers of Justice*.” (James M. Bates to Sol Smith, September 12, 1846. Letter in the possession of the Missouri Historical Society.)

³¹ William E. Burton (1804-1860), favorite comedian, especially in such parts as Sir Peter Teazle, Captain Cuttle, and Mr. Micawber, and in the best type of burlesque, and proprietor of Burton’s Theatre, “the most popular playhouse in New York, if not in America.” Before coming to New York, he had managed a theatre in Philadelphia. He was loved and respected by all. [Walter Pritchard Eaton in the *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York, 1928), III, 346.]

gaged at Niblo's which on his arrival he found in ashes.³² He brings a very strong letter from a Friend in Dublin to Mr. Kean by which it appears he is a gentleman by birth and education—he brought a very strong letter to Mr. Simpson from *Macready*—who having his time quite filled up had nothing to offer him but the Farces during Mrs. Mowatt's engagement—³³ which he was advised to accept that he might *hail* from the Park. I have not *seen* him act—but I know he played some successful engagements on the other side of the water and he comes so very strongly recommended here that if you can consistently with your interests give him some nights I think you will confer a service on one who seems to be deserving. At any rate I have done my duty to him by mentioning to you with what warrant he comes—and my duty by *you* in not stating anything for which I cannot answer. Our *Two Gentlemen*³⁴ has done all we hoped and acted *lighter* than might be expected. The Jealous Wife has been a *great hit*. Best regards to Mrs. Smith.³⁵

Yours sincerely,

Ellen Kean

³² "On the same evening [September 28, 1846] in which this important combination [Mrs. Mowatt and E. L. Davenport] was seen at the Park, a Mr. Leonard made his *début* as Terry O'Rourke, in the Irish Tutor, and continued for the week of the Mowatt-Davenport season in afterpieces which John Collins on the same stage, but a short while previously, had done so very much better. This engagement of Leonard seems to me one of the very most stupid things ever perpetrated by the none too astute Simpson." (Odell, *Annals*, V, 250.) On April 5, 1847, Leonard appeared in New Orleans under the aegis of Ludlow and Smith, once more trailing Collins, who had preceded him on the same stage by less than a month. He stayed a week, but seems not to have played a return engagement. (Ludlow, *op. cit.*, p. 656.)

Niblo's Theatre was burned to the ground September 18, 1845. It was not rebuilt until 1849. (Odell, *Annals*, V, 243.)

³³ William Charles Macready (1793-1873), celebrated English tragedian, and a rival of Charles Kean, whom he despised as much as he had admired Edmund Kean. The two men never met socially.

Anna Cora Mowatt (later Ritchie) (1819-1870), American playwright and actress. Her satirical comedy, *Fashion or Life in New York*, is still given to-day. She made her debut at the Park, June 13, 1845, and her first London appearance at the Princess's, January 5, 1848. In 1851 she returned to the United States, but retired from the stage in 1854. (*Macready and Forrest; and Their Contemporaries*, pp. 155-171.)

³⁴ *Two Gentlemen of Verona*.

³⁵ Elizabeth Pugsley Smith, second wife of Sol Smith, whom he married in 1839.

XXVI

CHARLES KEAN TO SOL SMITH

New York—
18 Nov. 1846

My dear Sir,

I have been so occupied day & night with rehearsals & necessary preparations for King John that I have been unfortunately unable to answer your letter sooner. We brought it out on Monday night to a House very much below the mark I calculated upon, & considering that I have expended \$8000 out of my own purse upon this revival you may imagine I feel rather disgusted, for such an exhibition was never witnessed before on an American Stage. They tell me it will increase in attraction—It may but I cannot depend on that! The want of *enthusiasm* on the part of the public has so influenced my feelings, that were it not for Mr. Simpson's sake, I would address the audience on the subject & at once withdraw the piece.

I have placed 150 persons on the Stage in one scene alone, dressed from head to foot in the accurate costume of the period—and my efforts did not receive the encouragement of one hand of approbation.

It has been to me the study of ten years (& six months active preparation) In addition to this Mrs. Kean for the 1st time plays Constance which in itself, you would suppose, would be a sufficient inducement to the play going public to witness the efforts of one of the first actresses of the day in a new Shakesperian character. Let me pass over my John & merely mention that Mr. G. Vandenhoff is expressly engaged for Faulconbridge & yet the receipts of our 1st night only reached \$865 & last night not over \$600 ! ! !³⁶

Have you the time open yet, about the date of our last years visit. If so, I think we will visit you & take our "*final farewell*" in New Orleans—Mobile & St. Louis & take leave here next

³⁶ For accounts of this production, see Odell, *Annals*, V, 252 ff. and Vandenhoff, *op. cit.*, pp. 220-221.

George Vandenhoff (1813-1885), was an English actor and lawyer. He made his American debut at the Park Theatre, September 21, 1842, as Hamlet, and later supported many leading stars. He retired from the stage and in 1858 was admitted to the bar in New York. He also gave readings and lectures.

Autumn, returning to England before Xmas 1827 [*sic*]. My object in staying north all this winter was to produce a succession of these revivals but of course I cannot call upon the Park management to expend money on the scenery of Macbeth, if King John does not amply reward them. Let me have your answer by *return*, for I am at present in that humour that for two pins I would be off for England by the December packet. Keep the contents of this letter to yourself, *at least for a time*. I can give you no information about the "children". I hear there are about 40 of them coming out, under the direction of a female *Tartar*!³⁷ Povey I believe is to be their agent.³⁸ Their terms are fifty pounds sterling pr night at the Park—at least I am *told so*!

I shall expect a letter from you as soon as possible.

Yours very truly

Charles Kean

XXVII

CHARLES KEAN TO SOL SMITH

New York. 84 Duane

23 Nov 1846

My dear Sir,

Mr. Simpson has behaved extremely ill to us & therefore we have determined to go *South*, or go *home*! Our play is nightly increasing in attraction & I make no doubt it would repay me in the long run what I have expended upon it. In a word, we will come to you the latter end of Feby (or earlier if you choose) or beginning of March—play three weeks in N Orleans, then as before a fortnight in Mobile, returning to N Orleans for the close of your season & open St. Louis with you. Our new play of the "Wife's Secret" I think will prove a card. On receiving your answer to this, I will send you the parts & a scene plot.

³⁷ A group of forty-eight little girls from Vienna under the direction of Mme Josephine Weiss from the Imperial Theatre. The dancing of these children was said to be very lovely, and they enjoyed tremendous popularity. (Ludlow, *op. cit.*, p. 673.)

³⁸ ". . . useful, if uninspired John Povey, so long utility man at the Park, but likewise theatrical agent on the side." (Odell, *Annals*, V, 427.) He had supported the Keans in many of their appearances at the Park.

One scene I think you would be obliged to paint for it. The outside of the House of Sir Walter Amyot in the Elizabethan architecture representing a large bay window latticed, 7 or 8 feet from the ground, with muslin curtains. When the scene opens, it is quite dark when suddenly the entrance of Lady Evelyn with a candle into the supposed chamber lights it up & her brother & herself are seen in conversation behind the curtains. On this scene depends the whole plot of the piece.

Richard IIIrd & King John (*not got up*) would each do a night or two I think. I shall wait anxiously for your answer, as on it depends my future course in this country.

The last two mails have brought us out many offers in England of £50 pr night & I am so thoroughly disgusted with Simpson & his management that I would gladly avail myself of them, but that we both desire to take leave of you & yours before we do so.

In our play of the Wife's Secret there is a very fine part of an Old Puritan Steward which Mr. Farren ought to play, if you can depend upon his *steadiness*, for he is the axle tree of the whole piece.³⁹ *Maud* is an admirable part for Mrs. Farren & then there is a gay saucy page which was excellently well acted here by Mrs. Hunt.⁴⁰ Your light comedian should play the brother.

Let me hear from you by return of mail & until that I remain
Yours truly

Charles Kean

³⁹ George Percy Farren (born, Dublin—died, 1861), comedian long associated with Ludlow and Smith. He was said to be a member of the celebrated English stage family of the same name. A skillful character actor, he was, nevertheless, because of his addiction to alcohol, frequently a source of embarrassment to his employers, who were also close personal friends of his and of his wife.

⁴⁰ Mrs. George P. Farren, formerly Mary Anne Russell. She was for a number of years leading lady for Ludlow and Smith, succeeding Eliza Riddle Field in that capacity. Later she toured the country as a star. Her last years on the stage were spent as an "old woman." She outlived her husband many years.

Mrs. Henry B. Hunt, formerly Louisa Lane and later, as Mrs. John Drew, one of the best-known figures on the American stage. She was the grandmother of Lionel, Ethel, and John Barrymore.

XXVIII

CHARLES KEAN TO SOL SMITH

Private I hope Mr. Farren will be
steady this time!

Richmond, Va.
 11 March 1847
 Thursday

My dear Mr. Smith

We start from this to-day, & although this letter will commence the journey with us, it is more than probable it may go ahead of us on the road.

Should you find, or imagine, any difficulty in commencing our engagement with the new play of the Wife's Secret put up the *Jealous Wife* for Monday 22, & keep the Secret for the 2d night. Mrs. Oakley is one of Mrs. Kean's strongest parts & is also a novelty, which I deem preferable to any of our pieces of last year.

Only let us find your company as *perfect* on our arrival this season as [they]* were last, & you will confer [torn]* obligation on

Yours truly

C.

*[Paper badly torn.]

XXIX

ELLEN KEAN TO SOL SMITH

Write and tell me the news

Morrison's Hotel
 Dublin
 Sunday August 1 [1847]

My dear Mr. Smith

I promised to send you a clear and true account of all that was going on generally and theatrically on this side of the Atlantic and I proceed to do so—

Jenny Lind is the great Star of the day and I suppose has extinguished ever other light—for I hear nothing of anybody. All are out. Macready—Helen Faucit—Cushman—Mrs. Butler all dead to the world at present and I can only tell you what I

hear they *have been doing*.⁴¹ Macready with his accustomed liberality has been taking large certainties from Managers but as his engagements have not warranted his demands, Managers are not disposed [to] repeat the experiment and this may account for his strange behavior in this city—

You will perceive by the enclosed scrips that the Dublin Manager has been in difficulties. He is an honorable man and most gentlemanlike and agreeable and Macready has been on terms of intimacy with him for over twenty years. When Calcraft's distress was made public Macready came to Dublin and *tried to get the Theatre from him*—and the first notice that Mr. Calcraft had of his being in the city was a letter from the lawyer requesting that Mr. Calcraft would show Mr. Macready over the Theatre if necessary⁴²—Now from one professional man

⁴¹ Helen Saville Faucit (Lady Theodore Martin, 1817-1898), one of the leading English actresses of the nineteenth century.

Charlotte Saunders Cushman (1816-1876), the great American tragic actress.

Fanny Kemble Butler (1809-1893), daughter of Charles Kemble and niece of John Philip Kemble and Sarah Siddons. She reluctantly went on the stage in 1829 to help her father, who was then the manager of Covent Garden, and made sensational success as Juliet. In 1832 she accompanied her father to the United States, where two years later she married Pierce Butler, a wealthy young Philadelphian. The marriage turned out most unhappily, and finally in 1845 she was compelled to leave him. She returned to England and in 1847 resumed her career as an actress, but, liking the profession as little as ever, soon gave it up to give the public readings of Shakespeare's plays for which she is still famous. She also enjoyed considerable success as a writer, among her works being: *Francis I* (a tragedy in which Ellen Tree created the leading woman's role), *Journal of a Residence in America*, *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation*, *Records of a Girlhood*, *Records of Later Life*, *Further Records*, and *On the Stage*. She was the grandmother of the American novelist, Owen Wister, author of *The Virginian*.

⁴² John William Calcraft was lessee and manager of the Theatre Royal, Dublin, from 1830 to 1851. "When Charles Kean made his acting debut at Dublin on April 21, 1828, in the part of Young Norval in *Douglas*, Calcraft counselled him and thereafter befriended Kean until he had thoroughly established himself. In consequence, a permanent intimacy between Mr. and Mrs. Kean and Mr. Calcraft, developed. Calcraft constantly was in financial difficulties as manager at Dublin, and especially so in 1847 when it appeared that the Theatre Royal might have to close. To help Calcraft in his troubles, his friends arranged a benefit night for him on July 24, 1847. Mr. and Mrs. Kean came over from England particularly to act in Dublin on that date as a token of their friendly esteem for Calcraft." (Letter from Professor William S. Clark to the author, March 23, 1939.)

There is no reference in *Macready's Reminiscences and Selections from His Diaries and Letters* to the incident recounted by Mrs. Kean. The actor was in Dublin February 1 to 9, but in the published diary at least there is at this point no mention of Calcraft. (P. 565.) However, on February

to another this was *hardly fair*—from one *gentleman* to another it was not *courteous*—but—from one *Friend* to another—*What would the world call it?* I believe in retribution on this side of the grave and such hard selfish acts must meet with punishment—A Lady of the same clique has not behaved in a womanly manner towards Calcraft for it was the cruel urging for immediate payment of a miserable debt of £50 at a time when the Theatre was suddenly closed by the illness of Miss Cushman that brought his affairs to this crisis—perhaps it was better for him—but no thanks to the Lady—The world is very hard and cold and the young people of the world are very different from what we expect from youth.

Fanny Butler has appeared with but indifferent success—She made a great mistake in demanding £100 per night of Bunn—I think it injured her—people thought it impudent I am told she deserved better success—that she *acted well* and *looked well*. I think she would have a great season in America. Her separation from her Husband does not tell in her favor on this side of the Atlantic. Disobedient wives are at a *discount* I assure you.

Mme. Anna Bishop who is I believe already in New York is a *fine singer* and I hope will prove well for you in New Orleans.⁴³ You will be glad to hear that my family together with my child are flourishing—I am thank God well—and quite able to continue acting.

With kindest remembrance to Mrs. Smith and the children and to all [who] are glad to hear of me

Believe me

Yours very sincerely

Ellen Kean

Our address is
Keydell Horndean Hants

14, 1837, there is this comment upon the manager: "He talked much as he always does, and alluded to his 'friendship' for me, which of course passed unnoticed by me." (Pp. 392-393.) This slur may have been personal; on the other hand, Macready despised his profession and there were very few of his associates whom he wished to acknowledge as friends.

⁴³ Mme Anna Bishop (1814-1884), celebrated English soprano. Sir Henry Bishop, the composer, was one of her several husbands.

XXX

ELLEN KEAN TO SOL SMITH

[1850]⁴⁴

My dear Mr. Smith

Thank you kindly for your letter and for your pleasant invitation but I tell you *honestly* that I do not think it likely we shall visit America again—not because we have no wish for it but simply because circumstances render it almost impossible. My dear Mother is just eighty years of age and I cannot disguise from myself that in a very few years I must lose her even supposing that her health holds out. You know well that nothing would tempt me to leave her in her last days and while time steals on he is daily rendering me more unfit for such an undertaking—I think too I should be unwise to leave my ground—and the same reason may apply to Charles—We never were so popular as now. Authors are writing for us. Managers are glad to see us and we have more engagements than my strength will allow us to get through and you know I do not flinch from pretty hard work. Now don't you see friend Smith that a trip across the Atlantic is unlikely.

Hudson the Irishman is coming out—he is a good comedian—a young man—good looking enough—and sings *sweatly*—I think he will do—and I think he would do *well* with *you*⁴⁵. You ask me what there is to come, and I answer *Nothing! There is no young talent*—There are a few people with requisites for the stage but conceit and ignorance will prevent them from ever becoming actors or actresses—Miss Woolgar I should say was the best card for America of the Ladies and she *is* a clever girl—half comedy half melodramatic—and would act a good *variety*

⁴⁴ The date is determined by Kean's statement in a letter dated "20 April, 1860" (Letter XXXIII) that Mrs. Kean's mother is ninety years of age. In this letter her age is given as eighty.

⁴⁵ "The regular fall and winter season of 1849-50 began on the following Monday, September 17th, when James Hudson, another of the Banquo line of Irishmen, made his first appearance in America in the never-failing *Born to Good Luck* and *The Irish Lion* . . . Hudson, a fine-looking man and a sweet singer, at once took a high place in the regiment of Irish comedians." (Odell, *Annals*, V, 513.)

which is invaluable in a star⁴⁶—and Simms Reave the singer would I think do something for you⁴⁷—and after these I really do not see anybody but the “*Auld ones*” worth a straw. I think Mrs. Mowat well worth your consideration⁴⁸—She has played her cards very wisely—She has not thrown herself in competition with any established actors—has made herself the *Heroine* of a respectable little *Box* of a Theatre and has now a few original characters to trade upon⁴⁹—She has the stamp of a London reputation and a long stay amongst us which in itself is a proof of success—I have not seen her therefore I can give you no opinion as to what progress she has made in her acting but I hear she is *looking very pretty* and *that is merit not to be overlooked*.

My dear Mother knows I am writing to you and desires to be most kindly remembered to you. She suffers eternal pain poor dear—having internally lacerated the muscle of her arm and the bone is inflamed—it is a sad trial to a woman of her years—but she is so good and patient—And I think I have given you all the news—I was shocked to hear of the death of poor Wilson the singer of *Cholera*⁵⁰—What a scourge that disease has become—Give my kindest remembrance to Mrs. Smith and *Miss Ellen Trees* love to the children.

Very sincerely yours

Ellen Kean

⁴⁶ Miss Sarah Woolgar, better known as Mrs. Alfred Mellon, a popular English actress. “Her name will be more generally and favorably known in connection with the series of domestic dramas for which the old Adelphi, under Mr. Benjamin Webster’s management, and during Madame Celeste’s popularity, became famous.” (Pascoe, *op. cit.*, pp. 261-264.)

⁴⁷ John Sims Reeves (1818-1900), celebrated English tenor. He was very popular in opera, oratorio, and concert.

⁴⁸ Cf. note 33, Letter XXV.

⁴⁹ The Princess’s. This London theatre, which Kean leased in 1851, was the scene of the spectacular Shakespearean revivals upon which his reputation chiefly rests.

⁵⁰ Apparently John Wilson, a tenor who first appeared in the United States in 1838.

XXXI

CHARLES KEAN TO SOL SMITH

Manchester—Queen's Hotel
29th Dec. 1859

My dear old friend,

A happy new year and a merry Xmas—and lots of them—I ought to have written you before this in reply to your kind letter, but my first Provincial tour after nine years stationary in London, has compelled me to brush up on many parts not acted for a long period and kept me with other exciting causes, continually on the *qui vive*—We have just concluded a most brilliant, overwhelming engagement in Ireland and are now passing through this city en route to Yorkshire, where we are engaged in Sheffield, Leeds, Hull, and York. In February we are divided between Edinburgh and Glasgow, and throughout March we shall be occupied in Aberdeen & the smaller towns of Scotland—Easter fortnight we are divided between Bath & Bristol.

We began in the middle of October & up to the present time we have been wonderfully successful—turning orchestra's into stalls—first wings into chairs—and doubling the prices all over the House. At the same time flattering as all this may be, I have not lost sight in “my mind's eye,” of America, and I should be grieved indeed were I to retire from professional life, which I shall do in four years, without bidding adieu to our friends in the United States. But such must be the case, unless my terms are complied with. Every manager gives them to me here, and consequently I could not accept of less elsewhere. They gave a clear half the receipts to Macready—They did the same by us on our last visit to the States, the Park Theatre excepted, and now I must have the same *everywhere or not go*—My dear Sol Smith my expenses are enormous—I carry with me, recollect (including myself) a party of eleven, or at any rate 10 persons. Here they are My wife & self—Miss Chapman—I am now about to bring a sister of hers upon the stage, a very

pretty promising girl of 16 years of age, who joins us next week for the purpose of commencing her probation.⁵¹

Dr. Joy, my agent & Secretary

Mr. J. F. Cathcart & Mr. Everett, who release me from rehearsals and all that trouble, which would *now* be too much for me, and prostrate my strength and nerve—⁵²

Of course I cannot be sure of the company of these last two named gentlemen, as they might decline to cross the Atlantic, although I do not think they would—Then I should not think of leaving England for so long a time without my daughter who has been too much separated from her parents already—Then she must have some companion, either in the shape of a Governess or cousin, for the poor child could not be left alone, when we went to the Theatre every evening.

The expenditure must exceed, and that considerably, five hundred dollars a week—Indeed I am afraid it would almost be double including travelling.

The lowest sum that could repay me & even that would not pay me as well as my home circuit would be ten thousand pounds sterling for ten months—\$50,000—Niblo appears to be my man, if he would come to the point, and next September twelve months—1861—the proper time.⁵³

It will be our *last visit* to the States as theatrical performers—You see I pour out all “my tediousness” upon you, and shall feel obliged if you can without inconvenience ascertain whether my views will be accepted in the proper quarters.

I wish to know all about it as early as possible, for I look a long distance forward, and if I forego all idea of America it would alter my plans here in some degree. That is, I should

⁵¹ Miss Chapman, Mrs. Kean's niece, daughter of the late John Chapman and the former Anne Tree. In publicity she seems always to have been referred to as “Miss E. Chapman.” The family called her “Patty.” To which of her sisters Kean is here referring cannot be definitely determined, but it was probably Nancy. In a letter written by Mrs. Kean to her husband in 1863 she quotes one she has received from Nancy, who was apparently travelling with him. Writing to his daughter while on his round-the-world tour, 1863-1866, Kean tells her that he has no use for any of the Chapmans except Patty and Nancy.

⁵² Cf. Introduction, p. 23.

⁵³ William Niblo first attained prominence as the proprietor of a restaurant in New York. “From such humble beginnings sprang Niblo's Garden, famed through many later years.” (Odell, *Annals*, III, 70.) Later, Niblo opened a theatre on the site of his garden at Broadway and Prince Street. (*Ibid.*, p. 372.)

not act in certain towns in England out of season, & press engagements too fast upon one another. I hear so high a character of Niblo, & his Theatre is described as so beautiful, that I turn my eye much more to him than any other manager I have heard of—The Princess's in London is going to the Devil as fast as it can in *every* way. They say Mr. Hanky the backer of Mr. Augustus Harris, has already dropt six thousand pounds!!!⁵⁴ That cannot go on—I cannot tell yet what the Pantomimes are likely to do, but from the beginning of the present season up to Xmas, the business has been very bad indeed everywhere & with everybody, excepting ourselves—In Dublin we averaged in 19 nights a little over two hundred pounds pr night and consequently I received nineteen hundred pounds (and £24 over) as my share—In Cork six nights produced eight hundred pounds—

We are all pretty well—much improved since our freedom from managerial responsibility. What do you think? Somebody must have stolen a copy of my "Wife's Secret" or else it has been taken down in short hand during its last run at the Princess's, as I perceived by the *Era* newspaper they have acted it at Laura Keene's Theatre—How disgraceful! What is the difference between this theft and your purse?⁵⁵

I have had a devil of an accident in the fight in Richard at Dublin a month since—I forgot my gauntlets in the combat & have nearly had a finger chopped off—I shall feel the effects for a long time, and have been obliged to remove Macbeth from my list of characters for a time, as I cannot grasp a broadsword—I can manage with my forefinger & thumb to hold the

⁵⁴ Mr. Hanky I have not been able to identify. Macready refers to a Major Hankey as "the principal amateur" in Dublin in 1837, but there is no reason to assume that this was the same man. (*Macready's Reminiscences*, p. 395.)

Augustus Harris, successor to Maddox as proprietor of the Princess's Theatre. In the fall of 1859 the Princess's was doing badly as Irving had failed there in his first London appearance, and business had continued bad after his departure. (Sherson, *op. cit.*, p. 144.)

⁵⁵ Laura Keene revived *The Wife's Secret* at her theatre in New York on November 9, 1859. (Odell, *Annals*, VII, 219.) John Coleman asserts that Kean made a practice of "anticipating Macready in the country, and laying his *repertoire* of new pieces under contribution. . . . By some sharp practice Kean had procured a prompt-book of Macready's arrangement of *Sardanapalus*, and had anticipated his production of the play in the country. Although Kean thought this a 'good business,' naturally Macready did not see it from that point of view." (Coleman, *op. cit.*, I, 196-197.)

foil in Hamlet, but I have no grip with my whole hand—I may consider myself fortunate that it is, as it is—

Matters look very squally in Europe. We are preparing for the worst, and getting our army & navy in a more efficient state—Nobody can tell what Louis Napoleon means to be at! I hear 10 millions is to be asked for next Parliament for the national defences—I hope it may be so, for we are very weak, as it is.

Our little misunderstanding with you about the San Juan affair, will I hope and think be all right, although your General Harney ought to be called over the coals by your Government for his folly to say the least of it.⁵⁶ Imagine two great nations, and cousin nations, going to war about a trumpery island and all through the officiousness of one man, who has exceeded his duty—I wish to live at peace for the rest of my life and most heartily join in the prayer “Give peace in our time, O Lord.”

Now my dear friend let me hear from you when it suits your convenience and allow me to impress upon you that, *if* we visit America in September 1861 I should like it settled, or at any rate so far advanced as to be the same as settled by Sept 1860.

God bless you & yours With my wife’s love to you, I am ever & ever

Yours sincerely

C. Kean

Don’t forget my permanent address—Athenaum Club, Pall Mall, London.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ General William Shelby Harney (1800-1889), American general. In 1858 he was assigned command of the Department of Oregon. “But his Anti-British and expansionist proclivities, especially his seizure of the Island of San Juan, soon caused his recall.” (F. L. Owsley in the *Dictionary of American Biography*, VIII, 281.)

⁵⁷ Kean seldom spelled the name of the Athenaeum Club correctly.

XXXII

CHARLES KEAN TO SOL SMITH

GREAT WESTERN ROYAL HOTEL
LONDON TERMINUS

5 April 1860

My dear Sol Smith

I am quite willing to leave everything to you—You know my terms, a clear half the receipts nightly, payable each morning after the performance.

The prices to be raised, but the amount can be left an open question for the present, or even until our arrival. I quite agree with you that New York & New Orleans are sufficient to have settled before we leave England next August twelvemonth, 1861. I should wish to visit the last named Town as early after Xmas as convenient, that we may have time to work ourselves back again up the rivers, for we must return in June 1862—I don't care about Charleston, S. C., but that of course will be as we find it on our arrival. To me it was always an indifferent Town—Our success in England has been wonderful—I mean of course the United Kingdom—In nine months we shall receive close on £12000.

Let me call your attention to one point—After a *rest*, & especially a sea voyage, my voice becomes rusty & hoarse, & should I commence all at once with heavy parts night after night, I should undoubtedly break down—I should propose therefore that I commence on a Wednesday—then to act on the Friday—not commence my nightly course of acting till the Monday—I should wish the Saturdays to be left to my discretion—No Sunday's at New Orleans remember—

We return to Dublin in November, & are engaged to E. T. Smith for Drury Lane for 24 nights in the winter—

I should like my first engagement in New York to be about three weeks & to return in about three weeks afterwards, having visited Philadelphia & Baltimore, for a fortnight, but still always keeping my Saturdays *free*. We leave this on Saturday for Bath—Bristol—Cheltenham—Gloster—Manchester & Liverpool.

I need not remind you that my address is Athenaeum Club—London.

God bless you and yours—Hoping we may meet next Fall twelvemonth,

I remain

Ever yours sincerely

C. Kean

I am deeply obliged to you for all your kindness—It is understood it would be our farewell visit previous to our final retirement from the stage.

Private & Confidential

If you can hear anything about a man of the name of Larkin, I wish you would let me know, *but pray on no acct. let it be surmised that I have been enquiring about him.* He was an English actor, & wanted to marry my wife's sister, now the widow of Mr. Chapman. He made himself very annoying to Mrs. Kean when Miss E. Tree. When we were last in America he was residing in Charleston, S. C., & wrote some very offensive letters—He was a Roman Catholic & endeavoured to convert Miss Anne Tree & partly succeeded. I am anxious to know if he is still alive—If so he must be over sixty years of age—I want to ascertain his whereabouts, for I think he is a little mad as well as bad & will be an annoyance to us. Try & find out if you can.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ T. Allston Brown's *History of the American Stage* (New York, 1870) lists a "Mr. Larkins" with the following note: "Born in England. Made his *debut*, in 1840, at the Charleston, S. C., Theatre. Retired from the stage." (P. 214.) A "Paddy Larkin" was for a time a member of the Ludlow and Smith forces, playing the part of the Prince in their elaborate production of *Cinderella*. "Mr. Larkin was a man of considerable musical capacity as a tenor singer, but unfortunately possessed of a very exalted opinion of his own abilities, which, in spite of that proverbial *modesty* attendant on Irishmen, would at times make itself apparent to the discomfort of those who might be performing in the same piece with him." (Ludlow, *op. cit.*, p. 473.)

Miss Anne Tree. Cf. Introduction, p. 5.

XXXIII

CHARLES KEAN TO SOL SMITH

20 April
1860

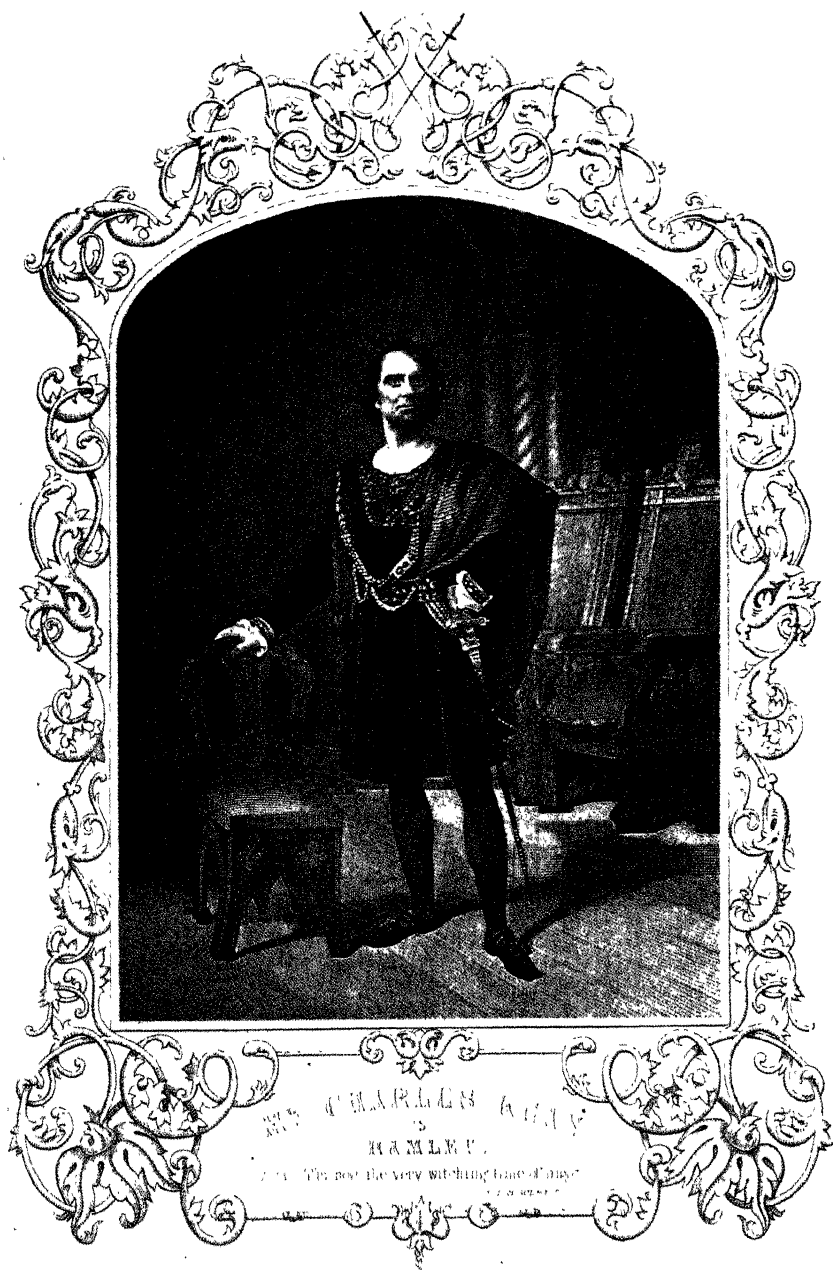
My dear Sol Smith

There is one thing in my last letter I forgot to mention—namely, that I wish *two* engagements to be made with the manager with whom I may open on my arrival in New York—That is, the one when I first appear, and another in about three weeks to be of the same duration, after having visited Philadelphia, Baltimore, or perhaps Boston as the case may be. You will not forget to lay stress on the increase of prices—There must always be reserved seats at a dollar or dollar & half. You will understand this.

My wife has bullied me for not sending *her love* to you in my last letter and though I assured her it was completely a letter of business, she says she does not care & I ought not to have forgotten it.

Her aged mother, 90 years of age, is in a very precarious state & we cannot tell how soon the result may come—"Thus we ripe & ripe, & then we rot & rot, & thereby hangs a tale"—I shall be very glad when our tour is over for we all begin to feel the necessity of some rest—All May & part of June we shall be divided between Manchester & Liverpool—After that a few stray nights & then a three months holiday. We have had a glorious success, but the *expenses* are enormous. I find it will require higher receipts in America to repay me than I anticipated. We ought to take for our share £15,000 (\$75,000) and even with that I should not be able to clear more than £7000, if so much—that is \$32,000—

I shall be very anxious to hear from you, that I may advertise in all my next season's engagements my "*farewell*" previous to my final visit to the United States—We are engaged for 24 nights at Drury Lane Theatre commencing on Monday 28th Febr. 1861—for which with my Benefit I shall receive about £2,000 (\$10,000) On the Easter Monday following I go for three weeks to the Standard Theatre in the East of London where I am to receive a clear half nightly, which is pretty certain to



(Courtesy of the Theatre Collection, Harvard College Library)

return me £1000 (\$5000). You must bear in mind that this is all in my own home & no horrid sea sickness to endure excepting an hour or so on the way to Dublin—

Dublin & Cork paid me last year £2000 for four weeks We go there again next autumn I mention these facts, that you will see the necessity of my terms & the raise of prices in the States, but I leave all to you in perfect confidence that you will do all that is right for me & mine in my final leave taking of my American friends—

Our political atmosphere looks very cloudy over here, & every body seems to suspect something is going to happen, but cannot say what—The thunderbolts are in the hands of the French Jupiter & no one can tell *where* the crash will come.

God bless you, & with my wife's *love* & my gratitude for all your kindness in thus undertaking my business, believe me ever sincerely yours

Charles Kean

XXXIV

CHARLES KEAN TO SOL SMITH

My dear Sol Smith

Your letter of the 1st May reached me yesterday, & I lose no time in thanking you for your great kindness—

I shall now wait for Mr. Niblo to advance—

My tour will end about the 1st July next and then we shall rest for about three months, most probably in travelling through Wales. Any letter however addressed to me at the Athenaeum Club by Mr. Niblo will be sure to find me in a very few days.

“Coming events cast their shadows before them” says the Poet, and the shadows are coming so fast and thick, that I am afraid the substance cannot be far off—I mean *war* with France. The gigantic preparations for hostilities all over Europe prove that it is not universal peace & Christian brotherhood that is uppermost in men's minds—However we are in Heaven's hands! Of one thing there can be but little doubt,—that any war is injurious to *Theatres* in this country, but one with our nearest neighbour, would be *ruinous*!

I have just recd. a letter from Mr. Henry Willard who says he was Anderson's agent wanting to know if I contemplate a visit to the U States—and talks about California & Australia⁵⁹—Of course I shall tell him in reply that negotiations are pending with another party, without mentioning names.

Our success continues as great as ever.

My wife sends her *love* to you, and believe me my dear Sol Smith

Ever your sincere and obliged friend

C. Kean

Waterloo Hotel

Liverpool

18th May 1860

P. S. I hope Niblo will not be long before he communicates with me, as I wish to settle this business as soon as possible. I shall know then what I am about with my engagements here. Don't fail to let me know about Mr. Larkin—If he be yet alive, what would be *his age*? What think you of Macready 68 marrying a girl of 22?

XXXV

CHARLES KEAN TO SOL SMITH

[June ?, 1860]

My dear Sol Smith

Your letter of the 28th May reached me yesterday & I hasten to reply that my answer may go by the steamer of to-morrow—

You are always too clear and Mr. Niblo is too old a soldier not to have understood you perfectly well, when you told him that we were not coming out till the fall of 1861. The mis-understanding is some political dodge for the purpose of a seeming indifference & cheaper terms!

It matters not to me in what Theatre I act provided that it is sufficiently large—The Winter Garden would suit my purpose if there be an eligible manager.

I should like to know all about it before Christmas next, because it would give me an opportunity of advertizing a "*fare-well*" previous to my departure for America.

⁵⁹ Henry Willard, a former manager of several New York theatres. Anderson. Cf. note 29, Letter XXIV.

We close our tour this day three weeks 6th July at Swansea in S. Wales, & I shall then take three months *rest*, which Heaven knows we want!

Should the Winter Garden be opened this season by anybody please let me know who and what he is—Our united loves and affections to you—

Ever sincerely yours,
C. Kean

XXXVI

CHARLES KEAN TO SOL SMITH

My dear Sol Smith

You are a good kind friend to take so much trouble about me and my affairs—I have been wandering through Wales for the last 2 months & on my arrival here found no less than three letters from you—

I am off for Paris the day after to-morrow but must be back within a fortnight, as we commence our professional tour again on the 1st October—I write in great haste only to say that as you know my terms & expectations I leave everything to you.

Announce my *farewell* visit to the States by all means & let it be understood that it is a *farewell* previous to our *final leave taking* in England.

My wife & I have both been very unwell & if you postpone our coming, you won't get us at all, for we are beginning to get very shaky.

Excuse this hurried note for I am writing in the middle of confusion.

Ever yours
C. Kean

Confidential

Have you heard of Larkin?
Charleston S C was his
headquarters

Salt Hill near
Slough
11 Sept. 1860

I should sail from England next August if matters are arranged.

XXXVII

CHARLES KEAN TO SOL SMITH

My dear Sol Smith

In my letter of yesterday I forgot to return the enclosed extract—I do not quite agree with your views on the subject although I admit the cleverness

I do not think Mr. Jackson is worth thinking of as a manager⁶⁰—He does not write like a man to be depended upon—Somebody I hope will turn up between this and next Easter.

I quite agree with your idea of announcing in the N York Herald & other papers my intended visit next Autumn for the purpose of a *farewell*—but we must manage to find Theatres large enough to pay. Wherever we play in New York the house ought to hold as much as the old Park—and if [I] remember rightly that would contain about \$2000 when crammed to excess—

I am off for Paris to-morrow to see if that will do me any good, for I am far from well at present—My nine years of management has played the devil with my health—

Yours ever

Gratefully and sincerely

C. Kean

Salt Hill
12 Sept
1860

 XXXVIII

CHARLES KEAN TO SOL SMITH

16th Nov.
1860

My dear King Solomon

I enclose you a letter from Mr. Henry Willard, which appears to be written with your sanction, but of course I cannot avail

⁶⁰ "The regular season [of the Winter Garden] of 1860-61 began on September 10th under the management of A. W. Jackson." (Odell, *Annals*, VII, 313.)

myself of his polite offer, as I have with me Dr. Joy who looks after my financial interests with the managers & I cannot afford *two* Agents—As it is, my expenses are too heavy & eat up profits more than I like. Besides Mrs. Kean & myself—there are the *two* Misses Chapman, nieces of Mrs. Kean, and two male Performers—2 servants & Dr. Joy. Now with salaries—living & I do not think I can calculate on spending less than \$100 (dollars) pr day!

Prodigious!!!

What think you? We cannot dine at public tables when we have to act at night, & I know to my cost that in America *private* apartments walk into the purse—The young men & Dr. Joy would find their own lodging, but still there would be *four* of my party, besides servants, and I should have to pay additional salary to those not of my family to induce them to cross the sea & travel so far.

I want to settle New York & New Orleans & the rest will take care of itself—I should like to open in September & leave again for home in the following June. Joy told me the other day that he saw in an American paper that Forrest was acting at Niblo's—If so, I presume the horses are removed—I am anxious to hear from you & hope that you will be able to give me some information by Christmas.

I have answered Mr. Willard, declining his offer but thanking him for his politeness—I commence here to-morrow & finish on Tuesday 11th December We then proceed to Cork—returning by Dublin go north to Belfast—In the early part of Jan'y 1861 we shall be in Bath & I begin an engagement of 24 nights with E. T. Smith at Drury Lane on the 28th January next—after which I hasten to Scotland⁶¹—I should like if possible that my New York engagement should be settled about Xmas next or at least in February—Because by that time I shall have to

⁶¹ Edward Tyrrell Smith, "perhaps the most wonderful and indefatigable impresario of all time, not even excepting Barnum himself. . . . He had an interest in Vauxhall Gardens. He ran the Marylebone Theatre for a time and subsequently Drury Lane (in 1853) He was the real founder of the Alhambra. . . . He leased Her Majesty's (the old Opera House) and organized Italian Opera. . . . He ran the Lyceum for two years." (Sherson, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-74.) John Coleman refers to "the late E. T. Smith, whose audacity was as astonishing as his enterprise, and whose ignorance was more astounding than either." [John Coleman, *Memoirs of Samuel Phelps* (London, 1886), p. 212.]

make my engagements with the young men who travel with me, as their agreement with me expires next June.

I have told my private friends of my intention of paying a farewell visit to the States next year, so that everybody expects my departure in the Fall.

Let me hear from you, if you please, and believe me, with my wife's best love to you, ever your sincere friend

Charles Kean

P. S. From Mr. Willard's letter it would appear to be necessary to stipulate with managers that I shall receive my share *nightly* after the play.

XXXIX

CHARLES KEAN TO SOL SMITH

My dear old friend

I am always so glad to see your handwriting and your letter of the 6th November has just been read by me—The advertizement of Mr. Forrest by Mr. Nixon does not give me a very high opinion of the latter gentleman, & I should be very chary of engaging with him.⁶² I should surmise from the style that Mr. Nixon is not a very refined man, & one who might perhaps do more *harm* than *good* by his announcements—What of the Winter Garden?

Is not a Mr. Stewart or Steward the manager of that Theatre?⁶³ I am told that he is a good business man, and has considerable influence in New York—I certainly should like to have the New York engagement as good as settled, by next Easter Sunday, for otherwise it will deprive me of the power of announcing "farewell" engagements here previous to my departure for America.

⁶² James M. Nixon. "Throughout the summer of 1860, Niblo's Garden had been in possession of Niblo's great circus; by September 17th, however, Nixon, now manager of the place, had cleansed his Augean stables, and started a dramatic season so splendid that I needs must range Niblo's in the front line of theatres. . . . Allston Brown states that Forrest was under contract with Niblo to appear for one hundred nights in the leading cities, and was to receive half of the nightly gross receipts." (Odell, *Annals*, VII, 322. Brown, *A History of the New York Stage*, I, 189.)

⁶³ William Stuart, partner of Dion Boucicault in the management of the Winter Garden.

50 cents all over the House cuts down the receipts most dreadfully from my *last* visit to the U States—Surely with us & a “farewell” they would stand one portion of the House at a dollar—If they do not, I don’t see how it could possibly give me a profit.

I am acting here a *very fine* engagement—Not so overwhelming as last year, but that of course was not to be expected. That was my first visit for 10 years—To-night the Ld Lieutenant—Earl of Carlisle—comes in state, being what is called a Command night—We shall be crammed from floor to ceiling—I condole with you most sincerely on the loss of your 2 grandchildren—My wife is much cut up by the state of her aged mother’s health who is over 90 & in her dotage—“Sans eyes, sans teeth, sans taste, sans everything”

I hope this Southern agitation with you will cool down—It looks from this distance rather stormy—We never heard of Mr. Lincoln in this country.

Everyone here expects a great row on the Continent in the Spring. I hope England will be out of it—Louis Napoleon, they say, is about to be a French Henry 8th & throw off the Pope—

What about Mr. Willard the Agent? As you do not name him in your letter, I suspect he used your honest name without title—I shall be glad to hear from you again, and think over for me if you please the Winter Garden & Mr. Stewart—I don’t much like Niblo’s Theatre without Niblo himself—& I fancy the other House would suit me best—but of course this is only fancy for I know nothing about it. You will not forget

Athenaum Club

Pall Mall London

My wife sends her love & I sincerely subscribe myself your friend

C. Kean

Dublin

29 Nov

1860

This will go by the Steamer of the 1st Dec.

XL

CHARLES KEAN TO SOL SMITH

Dublin—24th Dec. 1860

My dear Sol Smith

I sit down to answer your letter of the 4th Dec just received—We are preparing to start for Belfast & are in great confusion, so I have only time to write a very few words.

Pray do not for one moment think of James Wallack for me.⁶⁴ I was with him at the National that was burnt, and afterwards played at Niblo's, then a small House, when he removed there after the fire—for which he never paid me & it was done in a very unhandsome manner.

I have no faith in the man & never wish, if I can help it, to come in professional contact with him.

What about this secession question with you? If the feeling increases and a separation takes place between North & South the excitement will be so great, that I should fear the result of any theatrical speculation, however attractive it may be presumed to be.

Let me know, if you please, your opinions upon this subject, because it *might* postpone my transatlantic trip for another year—

You on the spot will know the state of affairs, better than we can gather here from newspaper reports, which generally write as their prejudices guide them. Did you receive the Dublin paper with my speech, wherein I told the audience I was going to America?

⁶⁴ James William Wallack (1795-1864), eminent British actor; younger brother of Henry, father of Lester, and uncle of James, Jr. It was he who was sent by Price down to Eton to lure Charles Kean to Drury Lane, and who played Glenalvon to the latter's Norval. "He dressed Kean and absolutely 'shoved' him upon the stage, for he was very nervous." [Lester Wallack, *Memories of Fifty Years* (New York, 1889), p. 92.] "During his visits to Brighton he was a frequent guest at my father's house, where he was sincerely liked." (*Ibid.*, p. 95.) "Charles Kean's second visit to America was under my father's management, in 1839, and he was to have acted *Richard III* in the National Theatre, New York, the night it was destroyed by fire." (*Ibid.*, p. 98.) In 1852 J. W. Wallack opened Wallack's Lyceum, later Wallack's Theatre, and in 1861 another theatre of the same name. [Laurence Hutton, *Plays and Players* (New York, 1875), pp. 96-97.] "We can hardly realize how many healthy, pure new plays, and how many of the best stock actors, have been introduced to us by the Wallack family; nor do the public fully appreciate how immense as actors, and how excellent as gentlemen these Wallacks have been." (*Ibid.*, p. 94.)

I was sorry to find that Genl. Morris did not give us a *lift* in his announcement of our intended visit.⁶⁵ It did not look cordial or as if there existed any particular kind feeling in the matter.

The Theatres in London are doing wretchedly with the exception of Robin Hood Opera & the Boucicaults at the Adelphi.⁶⁶

Fechter the French actor talking English does *not* draw at all⁶⁷—If the Christmas pieces do not bring up managers, London & Provincial, there will be many bankrupts.

⁶⁵ George Pope Morris (1802-1864), American journalist and poet. He founded and edited, sometimes in association with N. P. Willis, a series of papers, usually including the name *Mirror*. The one he was publishing at this time was *The Home Journal*. "He was usually called 'General' Morris—a title derived from his connection with the State Militia." (Nelson F. Adkins in the *Dictionary of American Biography*, XIII, 207-208.)

⁶⁶ Dion Boucicault (1820-1890), Irish actor and playwright, reputedly the natural son of Anne Darby Boursiquot and Dionysius Lardner, a well-known lecturer on scientific subjects. During Kean's first seasons at the Princess's he provided him with several plays, notably adaptations of Dumas' *The Corsican Brothers* and Delavigne's *Louis XI*. In 1853 he went to America, followed on another boat by the young actress Agnes Robertson. "His wife was the lovely Agnes Robertson, ward and adopted daughter of Charles Kean. He eloped with Miss Robertson and undoubtedly married her. I say 'undoubtedly' for, in after years, for some reason of his own, Boucicault chose to try and repudiate this marriage, in order, probably, to marry a Miss Thorndyke. For this baseness he was most deservedly cut by all his former friends, that host of friends whom he had made during his London life, when he had a charming house at Earls Court. . . . A well known American writer, Fiske, said of him that he had had yet another wife before he married Miss Robertson." (Sherson, *op. cit.*, pp. 156-157.) During their married life, the Boucicaults enjoyed great popularity. Among his best known plays are *The Octoroon*, *The Colleen Bawn*, and *The Shaughraun*. In 1885 he went to Australia and married Louise Thorndyke, Miss Robertson having secured a divorce. He inaugurated the system of forming road companies and so brought to an end the stock company system which had been in operation since colonial days. (Walter Pritchard Eaton in the *Dictionary of American Biography*, II, 426.)

⁶⁷ Charles Albert Fechter (1824-1879), celebrated actor of French and German extraction. He was the original Luis and Fabien in *The Corsican Brothers*. Kean was probably indulging in wishful thinking, for Fechter definitely was drawing. "Fechter made his debut at the Princess's Theatre on the 27th of October, 1860. The novelty of seeing an eminent French actor translated into English created more than a momentary sensation. The papers were enthusiastic, and *Ruy Blas* became the hero of a hundred nights." [Kate Field, *Charles Albert Fechter*, American Actor Series, (Boston, 1882), pp. 49-50.] "That any Frenchman should act in English at all was too much for that Etonian spirit [Kean]. But that he should act any of his—Kean's parts—was sacrilege. Someone asked him if Fechter had taught him his Mephistopheles. 'Taught me, did he? Dab his impudence. I went to see him in Paris, and he showed me how to bake by dose.'" [W. Teignmouth Shore, *Charles Dickens and His Friends* (London and New York, 1909), p. 277.]

Now my dear friend accept *our* best wishes for a happy Xmas and a jolly new year, & plenty of them—You are a kind good friend & my wife & myself both feel your goodness sensibly—

With regard to your views of our N York engagement, I perfectly agree with you; but at the same time I should like to know something definite as soon as it may be convenient & possible.

But this confounded secession question bothers my brains most terribly—

Ever yours
my dear friend
Charles Kean

Mrs. K. sends her love—She is suffering from a most *dreadful cold*.

Do you ever get extracts from the papers I send copied on your side—

My Dublin speech would do good, would it not, if transferred to the American journals?

P. S. Should you not recommend our opening in New York early in September? I have always done so before on each occasion of my *three* visits & found it a capital time—The town full of strangers—The regular residents will see me in the second visit to New York—Recollect money, not fame, is *now* my object—Final retirement from the Stage is my object & money alone can carry out that view—

XLI

CHARLES KEAN TO SOL SMITH

Belfast 27 Dec 1860

My dear Sol Smith

I wrote to you a few days ago from Dublin and the same Packet will take this letter also—I enclose you some verses on my wife published in a Dublin paper and copied into one of the local journals here.

Your mention of Wallack has startled me—Pray do not think of him or hold any communication with him directly or indi-

rectly on my acct—. He owes me already a considerable sum of money for my last engagement with him, & I do not wish to try him again—Don't think of him for me—Nixon or anybody would be preferable.

One of my young men (Cathcart) told me last night that he had recd a letter from London wherein it stated that Phelps was in the green room of the Princess's the other evening & mentioned that he had recd an offer to visit the United States, & that if he could find anyone who would take his Theatre (Sadlers Wells) off his hands for the time, he felt inclined to accept it⁶⁸—Can this be true? Who is there to offer the said engagement? Might this not be a boast because he hears that I am going It is singular that he should receive an offer & that none should come to me—

Do you ever in America meet with Willmer's *European Times* which is made up for the Steamer that leaves Liverpool every Saturday⁶⁹—He is a friend of mine, and often copies the notices of my progress—

Now *do* tell me candidly what you think about this "secession" question—Theatricals only prosper in calm waters—If there is to be storm & tempests with you on your side, it would be useless our coming out—The public pulse must be quiescent for us to succeed to the extent I hope and anticipate—To us in England matters with you look *very serious* but the observer on the spot knows best the real truth—Only not being compromised with any manager it would be better to postpone my transatlantic

⁶⁸ Samuel Phelps (1804-1878), celebrated English actor and manager, and, after Macready, Kean's most dreaded rival. In 1844 in association with Mrs. Warner (a well-known tragic actress) and T. L. Greenwood, he leased the very unfashionable Sadler's Wells Theatre in the north of London, and there launched a series of Shakespearean revivals which continued through the season of 1861-1862. "This remarkable house, under the leadership of Samuel Phelps, probably did more to popularise Shakespeare in the course of eighteen years (1844-62) than did any other theatre in the whole domain of English theatrical history." (Odell, *Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving*, II, 247.) "Injurious and impertinent comparisons were continually instituted between Sadler's Wells and the Princess's, usually to the detriment of the former, utterly oblivious of the fact that one theatre was suburban, the other metropolitan, . . . that Kean could, and frequently did, take as much money in two nights as Phelps took in six. The acting in both theatres was on a very high plane, but the productions at the Princess's were infinitely more splendid." (Coleman, *Memoirs of Samuel Phelps*, p. 214.) Phelps was generally accounted a finer actor than Kean.

⁶⁹ *Willmer and Smith's European Times*, published in Liverpool.

visit for another year rather than risk success on acct of political excitement. You know best all about this, & I shall anxiously await your answer—Of course I do not want to put off my American tour, as every year tells against us *now*, & makes us look older.

You have heard I suppose that Bunn the former manager of Drury Lane and Covent Garden is dead⁷⁰—He died suddenly of apoplexy at Boulogne, where he has been living for the last year or two—He turned or rather became a Roman Catholic for he had no religion before, & better that than none.

You will receive this about the 12 Jany & I shall hope to receive your answer by the time I go up to London to appear at Drury Lane on the 28th Jany We shall do great business here—Our average will be for seven nights £100 pr night (that is \$500)

God bless you my dear friend & may you see many many more years of happiness & plenty—

With my wife's love I remain ever & ever

Yours sincerely
Charles Kean

XLII

CHARLES KEAN TO SOL SMITH

Dublin—Gresham's Hotel
3 Jany 1861

My dear Sol Smith

"More light and light—More dark & dark our woes" which literally translated means, that as each mail enlightens us as to your doings in America, the worse appear our prospects with regard to a theatrical visit—the last Steamer which has just arrived seems to assure us poor Islanders that "Secession" is

⁷⁰ Alfred Bunn (1796-1860), manager of Covent Garden and Drury Lane from 1833 to 1835, and of Drury Lane alone until 1848. In 1838 he engaged Kean at £50 a night, a sum heretofore paid only to his father. Bunn says in his recollections that if the sum had been only fifty shillings, detractors would have said it was too much. On January 7, the manager made this entry in his diary: "he has good qualities in him, with a very gentlemanly mind; Eton has done that part of the business for him—he'll get well through—doing much himself, and we helping him with the rest. . . . 'Is it the king?' will hit others, 'I guess,' as it hit me." [Alfred Bunn, *The Stage, Both Before and Behind the Curtain* (Philadelphia, 1840), II, 99.]

certain with some of the cotton states, & not unlikely with any—That in fact civil war with all its horrors is looming in the future! God forbid it may be so, for your sakes and for the sake of humanity—

I left Belfast this morning where I became acquainted with the U States Consul—A very nice, pleasant, gentlemanlike person⁷¹—He did not appear to think so hopelessly of coming events as the *Times* of this day which I read on my arrival here about 2 hours since! By the by this gentleman informed me that Mr. Nixon gave Mr. Forrest \$500 pr night (£100) for 100 nights during the season to go wherever Mr. Nixon chooses, but that the bargain had paid so well that for something like 40 nights already, he had confined his services to Niblo's Theatre!

Is all this true?

I have sent you many papers—I do hope they have reached you. You will see by them how well we are doing and how well they think of us.

“James Wallack—no—no—We'll no Wallacks” The Consul told me that Niblo's was the best Theatre for my purpose, but what is the use of choosing a Theatre, when the probability of a visit grows more dim and dim—We cannot come if it is to be a case of “bloody noses and cracked crowns” Now like a good sensible man as you are tell me your candid opinion Is it to be “Secession” or is it not?

If “secession” is it to be peaceable or warlike Under the most favorable circumstances when will the agitation so far cease as to admit strolling players with safety & profit? It would disarrange my plans *most terribly* not to go next autumn at the same time a *last* visit to America is too serious a matter upon which to run any risk. “Better to do nothing than to do evil.” You are a good lawyer—Now I want your council as a “good man and true” & your opinion upon the present state of affairs—Recollect what you say to me is strictly confidential—I know very well that in this country, theatricals *never* prosper when the public pulse is excited—All must be calm—and as we have only one farewell visit to make, we must not throw that visit away which would under good auspices make the difference in my retiring pension of competence or luxury! That is, whether

⁷¹ Theodore Frean.

I can treat friends as well as myself—There is a great distinction between having the command of ready money, and living off the interest of what you have saved—£300 or £400 *pr annum* additional makes all the difference & that, or nearly that the United States could give me, if all goes well. But will all go well? We can wait a year longer but then we shall be a year older and at our time of life we cannot well afford that lapse! However, “Come what, come *may*, time & the hours ring strongly the roughest day.”

I am a firm believer in the creed that teaches us that whatever is, is for the best—Apart from my own personal interest, let me hope, pray that there will be no fighting—When a young man I thought war a grand affair, but now as I approach the “bourne from which no traveller returns” I shrink from its very name—The horrors that accompany it in its course are sickening and in your country it would be outrageous to see brother armed against brother—

Well I have done—I will wait with patience & watch the wheel of Fortune living in expectation of a hopeful, pleasant letter from you, who ever bring to my mind the memorable words of the poet Pope “An honest man is the noblest work of God”

Ever your sincere friend
C. Kean

XLIII

CHARLES KEAN TO SOL SMITH

Bath—York House
15 Jan'y 1861

My dear friend

Yours of the 26th Dec has reached me this day.

I am not surprised that you request me “to take the matter into my own hands” for I am sure I do not see what more you could do—You have acted for me in the most kind & business-like manner, but if responsible managers cannot be found, or if found will not understand straightforward questions, nothing is left to us but resignation—

Niblo is a Dodge—He knows very well what you required in my behalf but does not choose to open his gates freely to negotiation—However in the political storms that appear pending in your horizon, I fear it would be highly injudicious to cross the Atlantic at all next Autumn—We must wait & see how this agitation proceeds—No theatrical ship sails well in troubled waters. The sea must be calm, or the vessel will be overwhelmed by the storm—We in England look upon the state of affairs with you as most serious & of course commercially we shall feel the shock here, if there be an earthquake in the States

Before I had recd your letter, I had pretty well given up in despair all hope of a tour through the United States, at any rate for another year or even more, but now that I have read what you say about the managers, I feel that I have no choice but to wait & see what chance may bring about—As to Boucicault my dear friend, he is a gentleman to whom I can never speak again, and indeed any man would lose caste here by being seen in his company. His character is so bad, that there is not a crime under the sun of which he is not accused.⁷² The most dreadful stories are told of him—He and his play of Colleen Bawn are drawing crowds—Indeed the Adelphi is the only Theatre in London at the present moment doing *great* business.

Celeste is going to the wall I fear as fast as possible⁷³

The Princess's is only just paying its way, & that will fall off by Feby. when all Theatres sink after the Xmas holidays—Even Drury Lane is not holding up its head as usual in the Pantomime. Wigan at the old St. James's is doing very badly, and as from some freak he will not give an order, the Houses there look wretched beyond description—I open at Drury Lane on Monday week the 28th as Hamlet after a year and a half' absence from town At present we are doing capitally here but I am suffering from a severe cold and hoarseness which troubles me much & makes me nervous about my visit to London—I can contend against any illness, gout included, but hoarseness beats me—Once lose the organs of voice & I give up. I shall now have to look out for another season at home—How strange—

⁷² Boucicault. Cf. note 66, Letter XL. Kean never forgave him for eloping with Agnes Robertson.

⁷³ Mme Celeste Elliott (1814-1882), celebrated dancer, pantomimist, actress, and manageress. She was born in France, but married an American. In 1860-1861 she was playing successfully at the Lyceum in London.

when only a few weeks since I announced from the Dublin stage my intention of visiting the United States as a farewell before my final retirement on this side of the water—I can hardly believe the extraordinary change that has taken place—It seems like a dream—What, the United States—*disunited*! Impossible—I should as well think of Scotland or Wales separating from England—Now pray do not stop writing because you are no longer acting for me, but let us write on, as friend to friend.

Now for the present, good bye, and that you may live long in health and prosperity is the sincere wish of yours ever truly

Charles Kean

My wife is just come into the room & desires her love & kindest regards to your family.

XLIV

ELLEN KEAN TO SOL SMITH

Oct. 16⁷⁴

Hull

My dear Mr. Sol Smith

I avoided writing to you for many a month in the hope that I might write of your country's troubles as a thing *past*. I hoped to be amongst you by this time for I was yearning to personally say goodbye to my dear and kind friends in America before I left my profession—in which feeling I was joined warmly by my husband.

I do not ask you my dear friend to give me any news relating to this terrible struggle, I only want to know that you and yours are safe and well and will wait for all other news to be conveyed through the public channels.

May God send you all peace and comfort!

We have commenced our professional year brilliantly. We have just finished an engagement at Birmingham and turned money away nightly. We are taking an easy week here—and

⁷⁴ This letter must have been written in either 1861 or 1862; by October, 1863, the Keans were in Australia. 1861 seems the more likely date of the two because she says her mother was ninety-one at the time of her death, and speaks as if she had died rather recently. Mrs. Tree was, we know, ninety in 1860.

another at Bradford, and then proceed to Newcastle upon Tyne where we are to *do greatly*—Brighton, Exeter, Plymouth, Bath and Bristol all promise finely—and in February we begin at Drury Lane, where we have a long engagement. I shall send you newspapers and a letter now and then to let you know of our doings and I shall look very anxiously for a few lines from you. Now remember I ask no delicate questions and I do not expect any news except of yourself and family. Let me know that you are all safe and I will be content. I have had a sad loss since you heard from my Husband My beloved Mother has been taken from us—but dear Mr. Smith she was 91—and the Almighty had spared her to me very long. She was a wonderful woman and took her usual walk only four days before she passed away. She remembered you—and often talked of you. Give our kindest regards to Mrs. Smith. My young Ladies desire to be remembered to you.⁷⁵

Your sincere friend,

Ellen Kean

Atheneum Club will always find us.

XLV

ELLEN KEAN TO MARY KEAN

Occidental Hotel San Francisco
Sunday night Oct. 9 1864

My dearest Mary

. . . . Your Papa and I often talked of him [William Barrow] in Melbourne and felt thankful nothing had prompted him to try Australia.⁷⁶ Oh the many poor wretched disappointed ruined William Barrows there are in that hard stony wicked place! Thank God they are battling out their trials in our own happy land and you are with them. We commenced acting last night. 1565 dollars in the house being over 300 dollars more than they

⁷⁵ Her daughter, Mary, and one or more of her Chapman nieces. No doubt Smith had met them during his visit to London.

⁷⁶ William Barrows, apparently a member of the family with which the Keans' daughter, Mary, was making her home in London during the absence of her parents.

had ever had in the house before proving that Mr. Coppin had *a la Joy* checked the treasurer and opened the Proprietor's eyes a little.⁷⁷ They were a most orderly quiet audience, not very demonstrative in Henry 8th—but in fits at the Jealous Wife. Your Papa was in good voice. Patty had a severe cold—but was so skillfully treated by a Doctor here that she got on famously—and *I* about whom there was no fear utterly lost my voice at the end of the trial scene. I *gargled*—I *drank*—I *lozenged*—I painted my throat with Papa's stuff. And one or all of these things suddenly restored my voice—I had to be careful and it curbed my acting—but I got through—and Mrs. Oakley was *all right*. That—The Jealous Wife—was *the* great hit. It is no matter what. We are here for money not fun and it little matters what brings them.

We had a little supper laid out for us. Oysters—some slices of cold turkey—cold boiled beef—a *cold fowl* bread and butter. We made our supper off the oysters. This morning being very restless I got up early and was a good deal surprised to see oyster shells on the floor—all the bread gone—in fact everything but the boiled beef. Papa awoke and said Oh! I have had such a night with the *rats*—mind the *rats*—*not cats*—and sure enough the rats had taken away every thing and deposited the cold fowl at the foot of Papas bed. A grandson of Mrs. Moses of Henway [?] gold celebrity (a Jewish Jeweller) called on me to day saying that his grandmother had written to tell him to be sure and call and ask if he could be useful.⁷⁸ He is a lad of about 18—his parents are pawnbrokers in this city and seven weeks ago he was attacked in their store, which is in the crowded part of the city—at three oclock in the day and left for dead. The ruffians stole four thousand dollars worth of property—and left the poor boy with his head smashed in—his eyes protruding from strangulation and scarcely any breath left in his body. His father found him on the ground bathed in blood and the villains

⁷⁷ George Coppin, manager of the Haymarket Theatre in Melbourne, under whose management the Keans went to Australia. (Sillard, *op. cit.*, II, 68.) Dr. Joy did not accompany them after all. But Sillard is in error when he states that Coppin returned to England with the Keans in 1865. The Keans did not reach home until 1866, and in the meantime, according to Kean, Coppin, after serving as the actor's agent for some months in the United States, returned to Australia by way of England alone. (*Ibid.*, p. 83. Charles Kean to Sol Smith, November 3, 1865.)

⁷⁸ Unidentified. Mrs. Kean's handwriting is almost illegible at this point.

have not been discovered. We have had two frightful murders since our arrival in the streets

Wednesday 12th The Louis XI went finely on Monday—last night a repeat of Henry 8th and Jealous Wife—a good house to Louis—fair to Henry 8th last night. We are greatly damaged by political meetings Last night there was a procession of ten thousand people lasting from eight o'clock in the evening until today, and next Saturday 1st night of Wives Secret—there is to be a procession of from fifteen to twenty thousand people. This of course *must* damage us—and it will go on three times a week at least until the 8th of November is over. It is provoking for we should play a great engagement were it not for this political excitement.

. . . . I enclose you extracts from 3 newspapers. I am now expecting a visit from a gentleman who will bring the chief superintendent of the silver mines at Victoria City to see us so that if we go there he may show us all the wonders.

I cannot give you any news of our onward movements in this letter. We can tell nothing just yet. Give our love to the Barrows I will write as soon as I can—but my head is really a jelly And now God bless you my darling child. How I do long for you and home. Pray try and keep straight with the Youngs⁷⁹ They are good kind true people—friends to Papa when he wanted friends and do not let them be angry with you if you can help it—conciliate them. Mrs. Young was doubtless very anxious about you and recollect it is an unusual thing for so young a person to have the unlimited [?] power your Father gave you. You may be proud of that and I feel sure you will not abuse it. I am sure Mrs. Young was crammed with fears concerning you. Again God bless you and the Barrows

Your affec mother

Ellen Kean

⁷⁹ Unidentified.

XLVI

JAMES F. CATHCART TO CHARLES KEAN

Occidental Hotel Thursday Morg
Nov. 10 [1864]

My dear Sir

I am about to ask you if you will kindly favor and assist me to put a few extra pounds into my purse. Mr. Maguire will let me have the Theatre on Monday the 28th inst. after your present engagement ceases for a Benefit night for which he says he will but charge me his expenses, 300 Dollars, and several have promised to interest themselves to make me a good house.⁸⁰ The favor I have to ask is, will you and Mrs. Kean oblige me so far as to act for me on the occasion, and share with me the receipts after the 300 dollars? I believe it would enable me to send a very nice New Years gift to my Wife and children and much oblige, My dear Sir

Yours Obediently

James F. Cathcart

XLVII

CHARLES KEAN TO JAMES F. CATHCART (COPY)

Dear Sir,

I cannot but express my surprise and regret on perusing your note of this morning. My compliance with your request is out of the question having already declined to act on Monday the 28th for my own advantage and on my usual terms.

You must pardon me if I state in conclusion that I do not

⁸⁰ Thomas Maguire, proprietor of Maguire's Opera House, where the Keans appeared, as well as the smaller Eureka. "He was always smoothly appearing, always on view, quiet and somnambulist, hat well on one side, long cigar at an opposite angle, the mark of the gambler in every aspect of his resplendent appearance—Maguire who could neither read nor write, the cab-driver who had come from nowhere, turned gambler, had begun gambling in theaters, and who now held the fate of many an actor or company in his hand." [Constance Rourke, *Troupers of the Gold Coast* (New York, 1928), p. 80.]

recognize your right to announce a Benefit in any Town while forming one of my company and receiving a salary from

Yours faithfully

Charles Kean

10 November, 1864
Occidental Hotel

XLVIII

JAMES F. CATHCART TO CHARLES KEAN

Occidental Hotel

Friday night—Nov. 11th [1864]

My dear Sir—

Before I go to my bed this night I cannot help writing to express my regret that the request I made to you should have caused you any annoyance. I was not aware that you had refused to act on your own account on Monday the 28th inst. or I should have simply asked your permission to have tried a Benefit on my own responsibility, Mr. Maguire having promised me the use of his theatre and also having the promise of several to endeavour to make me a good house. You once, at home, gave me the permission to make a little extra money at any time I could get the *chance*, and I thought this would have been a good opportunity, nor do I think the favor I asked of you merited so unkind a reply nor the frowning looks I received from Mrs. Kean last night, nor *your* silent and cold bearing towards me tonight.

For the last five years I have travelled Fifty thousand miles and have played the second parts to you and my salary has but just averaged £300 per year, and as there was the chance of my adding to my receipts a few extra pounds here, I think it would have been only kind on your part to have allowed me to try the experiment (I had no idea of its acting as a precedent) after fourteen years in your service, especially as you risked nothing, however you are right I have no agreement with you to announce myself for a Benefit and I must abide by it. I will say no more but that I am sorry I have caused you any annoyance (which is evident I have done) and shall proceed with my

duties as usual, provided I am to be treated by you and Mrs. Kean with your customary courtesy and good will, *but* if I am to be met with black looks coldness and indifference (which I could not endure after so long a companionship) I should feel obliged by your cancelling my engagement at the termination of your present one with Mr. Maguire, and giving me the means to return to my home again.

I am, My dear Sir

Yours Obediently

James F. Cathcart

XLIX

CHARLES KEAN TO JAMES F. CATHCART (COPY)

[November 12, 1864]

Dear Sir

If your first letter was a mistake, your second received this morning is absurd and offensive. A simple apology would have been more becoming on your part for taking so great a liberty than the strain you have so unwisely adopted.

Your proposed *stipulation* with regard to my manner towards you, coming as it does from a man so much my junior is indecorous in the extreme, especially as it conveys a kind of threat; but I really do not believe you are conscious of your own rudeness. I shall expect you to fulfil the duties of your engagement with me, and you may rely upon it *my manner* will always be influenced by *your conduct*.

Let me see you once more assume your former modest deportment and you will see no alteration in the manner of

Yours faithfully

[Charles Kean]

I must request that this letter conclude our correspondence.

L

CHARLES KEAN TO MARY KEAN

St. Georges Hotel, Victoria
Vancouver Island
14 Dec 1864

My darling Mary

Here we are with the earth clothed in virgin white, accompanied by "a bitter and an eager air." It is in fact precious *cold* but the people are *warm* and are flattered beyond measure by our visit. Every body of note has called & on Saturday, the day after our landing, we dined with the Governor & his *really* charming family. I knew *him* 25 years ago in Waterford where he was recognized by the young ladies of the city as the handsome man of the eleventh Regt. He was then plain Capt. Kennedy and has since been Governor of Sierra Leone & Swan River on the Western Coast of Australia.⁸¹ He had taken a P. Box for the whole of our engagement but the news of his brother's death will, I fear, prevent his visiting the Theatre—

Your poor dear mother has a dreadful cold & hoarseness and has only left her bed since Saturday night to perform her duties at the *Theatre* which is a wooden building with plenty of drafts. The Governor of British Columbia, the adjoining colony of the main land arrived last night & immediately posted off to the Theatre—He has to return to New Westminster his Capital on Saturday—We shall leave this place again on or about the 24th for S. Francisco stopping as before a couple of days at Portland, Oregon, in the United States—We shall therefore again have to cross the dangerous bar at the mouth of the great river Columbia. It is a *shifting* bar of sand caused by the whole force of the Pacific Ocean rushing in at that point. Captain's & Pilots

⁸¹ Captain Arthur Edward Kennedy, C. B., Governor of the Crown Colony of Vancouver Island from 1863 until 1866, when it was merged with British Columbia.

always dread it & never venture to cross except in daylight.⁸²

The people here are inclined to pay us all sorts of honors, if we could find the time to accept them. The receipts of our first night were \$1,070—that is £265. & last night \$800—£160. To-night we shall have \$1000—£200. This is very great when you remember that the population is only between five & six thousand inhabitants.

It is such a relief to get away from those dreadful snuffling—spitting—chewing Yankee's—with their boasting impudence—and I assure you I am kept in awe of speaking out my sentiments by the frowns of your mother and the nudges of Patty. When we started by the Steamer all the pistols & knives were taken from the passengers—In the dining saloon at S. Francisco one day the waiter found a pistol loaded & half cocked lying on a bench which when he took to the office was claimed by a gentleman standing by as his property which had fallen from his pocket by *accident*.

An English gentleman became much smitten with a delicate lady like looking American & at length contrived to place himself by her side at dinner where she soon cured him for on his pressing her to partake of some particular dish she replied in these words—"Well then it must not be considerable for I am pretty well crowded now."

Imagine the Editor of the Portland paper in his critique upon us remarking that the reverence for Shakespeare was so great among the English that they made pilgrimages to "Abbotsford" to gaze on his residence. There is one thing very certain that Walter Scott's place & Shakespeare's birth & death place end in "ford" & I think *Waterford* might have been included as the

⁸² " 'Mere description,' said Wilkes [Commodore Wilkes of the United States Exploring Expedition] 'can give little idea of the terrors of the bar of the Columbia; all who have seen it have spoken of the wildness of the scene, and the incessant roar of the waters, representing it as one of the most fearful sights that can possibly meet the eye of the sailor.' " (*United States Exploring Expedition*, IV, 293, quoted in Melvin Clay Jacobs', *Winning Oregon: A Study of an Expansionist Movement*, p. 72.) "The breakers which barred the entrance to the largest river on the Pacific placed the settlers in an isolated position, baffled their hopes, frustrated their plans, and made them impatient with the tardiness of a government which struggled with the weakness of sectionalism." The Government eventually built walls "to accelerate the velocity of the current in order that it might carry the silt farther out to sea." (*Ibid.*, pp. 75, 71.)

birthplace of C. Kean and the representative of Shakespeare on whose performances they were remarking.

I have just heard that they are going to give us a *ball* here on the conclusion of our engagement and which will take place the night before our departure.

Dec. 21st

The mail steamer arrived in the night & will be off again directly so I have only time to write a few more words. Patty is in Heaven The Governor's wife (Mrs. Kennedy) drives her about in an open pony chaise & she has had one ride on horseback with the Governor himself & his second daughter. Tomorrow is the Ball when I suppose she will dance with his Excellency—

Mr. Cathcart has given me a great deal of trouble. He has become inflated with the praises he recd. in Australia & S Francisco & has become offensive & rebellious. He has turned to *drink* & had a bad fit of delirium tremens in crossing the Pacific through which my wife nursed him. He was compelled to call in a Doctor at S. Francisco but forgot to pay his bill before he left, after being due six weeks.

I do not think he will be with me long, for he has become very saucy. I am very anxious now to get back to California that I may receive your letter or letters for it will *then* be nearly two months since I have had a line from you—I dreamt of you last night & thought you had quite light hair & were looking fair—fat—& childish—I wish I could see you in reality for I am sick of the long absense. Your mothers cold is better but still not *quite* well. In *seven* weeks we shall be (D V) under a broiling sun experiencing the extreme of heat instead of cold as now.

Your mother as usual has written a folio with all the chit chat. I am writing this in bed. Enclosed are some extracts which will show you how great a favorite Cousin Patty has become. So now my dearest child farewell for the present. I will write again on our arrival at S. Francisco, which will be someday, I suppose early in Jany 65. Your affec. Father

C. K.

LI

CHARLES KEAN TO GEORGE COPPIN⁸³ (COPY)

Dear Mr. Coppin

I am at all times ready and willing to abide by any promise I may have made either in writing or by word of mouth. On the present occasion it appears that the matter in question does not rest with *me* for as a consequence I cannot act where there is no manager willing to receive me. To engage out of New York with the prices at 50 and 25 cts. in green backs would as you well know be simply acting for my Hotel bill and would give me but a mere bagatelle. Such a result was never contemplated & I really could not consent to place myself in such a position. An assured engagement in New York in a respectable Theatre on satisfactory terms even for 12 nights would have induced me to proceed thither, but to take me with all my heavy expenses to the Eastern states on a mere *chance* might place me in a very awkward predicament, as every week's detention would cost me at least \$500.

Why do you not *talk* over all this business with me instead of flying to pen & ink. You have daily opportunities for doing so & you will allow that I am entitled to expect to hear from you as my agent your opinions and suggestions. Your unfortunate silence upon all occasions is perplexing and painful in the extreme & is often likely to lead to misconstruction. I cannot imagine how my intention to return home direct can have taken you by surprise for I have several times alluded to the subject and as you made no response I naturally took it for granted that you saw no objection to this step.

You will remember that from the very beginning of our conversations on the subject of your Agency while at Melbourne our visit to the East was always spoken of by me as *doubtful*. I told you on these several occasions that the Eastern managers were doing too well to require me & mine but *your* impression was that as soon as it was known that we had arrived in California offers from the Eastern States would pour in upon us from New York. Events have proved that *I* was right, for

⁸³ Cf. note 77, Letter XLV.

not only have no offers been made to me, but my overtures have been rejected.

Several times on board the Fanny Small [?] & elsewhere you have answered my question of "What are we to do in case we are shut out of N. York" by saying "Then nothing is left to us but to go home."

I repeat that I am quite willing to go to N. York provided you can secure me an eligible engagement to act there, but then such an engagement ought to be secured before I leave S. Francisco. You can not expect me as a reasonable man to go as an adventurer to seek an engagement which has already been refused to me, and a moment's reflection should satisfy you that it is most unreasonable to expect that I am to run the risk of losing a large sum by going to New York without an engagement secured beforehand—such a thing I have never done in my life, & it was the possibility of not securing an engagement that suggested the terms of all our conversations on this point from the first. at the same time allow me to add that I am quite willing to pay the last part of your passage to N. York from S Francisco & I am ready to discuss the whole matter verbally in a friendly spirit, but you know that I am not in a condition to continue a correspondence that is quite unnecessary.

Yours very faithfully

Charles Kean

Occidental Hotel
23rd Jan'y 1865
S. Francisco

LII

CHARLES KEAN TO JAMES F. CATHCART⁸⁴ (COPY)

Sir,

In reply to your question I write to say that you will proceed on Friday 3rd of Feby by steamer to Panama, & on at once by the Steamer on the opposite side of the Isthmus to N. York. You will be in company with Mr. Coppin who goes to the Eastern

⁸⁴ The Keans themselves stopped at Jamaica.

states in advance of me. I expect to reach N. York on or about the 15th March.

You had better take up your abode at Leland's Metropolitan Hotel—Broadway, & I will make arrangements that you are lodged & boarded there which I will pay for on my arrival. I do not wish to allude to our late correspondence, but I think it a duty I owe myself to let you know that the young man who sat in your room during your illness was sent by the Doctors orders, & received strict injunctions from me & Mrs. Kean on no account whatever to mention the cause of his being placed there, for I thought the knowledge of the fact might wound your feelings & give a shock to your nervous system, suffering as you were at the time.

Yours obediently

C. Kean

24 Jany 1865

Occidental Hotel

LIII

CHARLES KEAN TO MARY KEAN

Metropolitan Hotel, N. York
Evening of 30 March 1865

My dearest Mary

. . . . When you see Mr. Crampton you can let him know that I am just holding out till I return to London, for my teeth are in a very bad state indeed—Your mother will have to see White Cooper about her eyes & so shall I, for the "three warnings" are coming upon me very fast—"Lame—deaf—& blind". . . .

Mind you write by the mail from Liverpool *every Saturday!* That means your letter must be posted early on Friday—before two o'clock. Make no mistake about the number of *stamps* or I may never receive the epistle—

If I am to believe Dr. Joy the Theatres in London & the Provinces are doing *greatly*. Times are changed indeed if this be a *fact*.

Don't believe in Mr. & Mrs. Wigan! They are snakes in the

grass & have done your Father all the injury in their power—
“*Trust not.*” Bad people, *very, very* bad. . . .

Your affect. Father C. Kean

LIV

CHARLES KEAN TO MARY KEAN

New York 4 April 1865
Metropolitan Hotel

My darling

I send you 2 photographs—I think them very *bad*—The stick in my hand is the one Donald Fraser gave me on my birthday. The head is Californian gold. D. Fraser is you know Miss Patty’s sweetheart, & would marry her to-morrow with his 9000 a year if she would only say “yes,” but she will *not*.

We went to the Theatre called the Winter Garden last night—The House was very indifferent & the acting so-so—We dine out today—to-morrow & Thursday I purpose going to Niblo’s (next door) on Friday to see Mr. Forrest in Richelieu—The Town is *drunk* with excitement by the possession of Richmond by the Federal army—

They *talk* a great deal here about war with England when they have settled their differences with the South.

Now what I am about to say is strictly *private* Tell me in your next precisely how you stand with Mr. & Mrs. Barrow with regard to *money* arrangements. *What do you pay them?* How long is the House they now reside in taken for & is the rent pd. by you? What money do you draw for yourself &. I want in fact to know *my expenses* as far as you are concerned—*not partially but completely*—Let me know *all* particulars.

You have paid up Meggy’s schooling in Paris I hope & the little boys also in London. Do not fail to give me full particulars. God bless you my dear. Mind you write *once a week* to your

affectionate Father
C. K.

LV

ELLEN KEAN TO SOL SMITH⁸⁵

My dear *old* Friend

What do you mean by saying your fingers are stiff with *age*?

Sixty one!

The age for fun

Sixty three!

*Fiddle de dee!*⁸⁶

"It is in ourselves that we are thus or thus." *Feel* young and you *are* so. When the buttercups and daisies spangle the fields, I am never more than eight years old. I will leave you and Mr. Kean to grumble.—I mean to be young to the end. My dear good mother *never* lost her youth.

We were very glad to hear from you. We had heard of you from your sons. What a fine looking fellow your son Mark is—and I remember him in Jacket and trousers.⁸⁷

Last night in the orchestra stall sat a *Lieutenant Colonel* in your Army. The last time I saw him he sat upon my knee in a green velvet frock, socks, and little bare legs. He enlisted at nineteen years of age when the war broke out and has been in all the battles on this side of Richmond and was at the taking of Vicksburg, and has never got a scratch. So you see *young* as I am I can remember a long way back . . .

I am not at all surprised at what you tell me concerning Mr. Ludlow. I took the greatest possible dislike to him from the first—and had all my trust in you although you did call me "*a disagreeable old maid*" twenty six or seven years ago. Ludlow was a *bad* man. He carried it in his face.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ The Keans opened their New York engagement April 26, and had, according to this letter, played seven nights. That would date the letter May 3, 1865. The postscript is dated the next day.

⁸⁶ Sol Smith was born April 20, 1801.

⁸⁷ Marcus Smith, usually known as "Mark," Sol Smith's second son (1829-1874). He went on the stage and eventually achieved great prominence, especially as an interpreter of old men, one of his greatest successes being in a play called *One Hundred Years Old*.

⁸⁸ Although partners for eighteen years, Sol Smith and Noah M. Ludlow seldom got along harmoniously. Some years after the dissolution of their partnership in 1853, a bitter quarrel broke out between them over a debt of \$10,000 owed Smith by Ludlow. The former was firmly convinced that his partner had transferred his real property to members of his family in

I should have written to you sooner but indeed this frightful business at Washington has upset us all and has interfered most strangely with our engagements. The postponement of our opening in New York is but a part of our trouble. We were then after New York to go under Mr. Ford's management to the Academy at Philadelphia, to Baltimore and Washington.⁸⁹ The news of the President's death of course put Washington out of the question, but still we had Philadelphia and Baltimore, but Mr. Ford the manager has been arrested either as a witness or some more serious matter and no one not even his wife is allowed to see him—so all that arrangement is at an end. Since I commenced this letter it is arranged for us to go to Baltimore next Monday week, not under Ford, and I think we shall give a *Reading* at Washington—but this upset is a heavy loss to us—We after this proceed west and shall be in St. Louis early to open on 19th June, so prepare the drums and trumpets. Talking of drums there was something that occurred in the funeral procession that was wonderfully characteristic of my husband's countrymen, *the irish*.⁹⁰ What do you think they played as their Funeral March? *See the Conquering Hero Comes!* The music altogether was not well chosen and the procession was not well arranged. It was straggled and spun out most tediously and lost all solemnity. No grandeur can be got out of anything scattered. Had they massed their fine looking soldiers it would have had a grand effect. The only really solemn thing was the Bier—That was handsome yet simple, and most beautifully decorated with exquisite white flowers. The sight of that brought tears into my eyes. All the rest looked more like the accession

order to avoid payment, and brought suit. A compromise was reached and the matter settled out of court, but the bitterness remained. When Smith wrote his *Theatrical Management*, shortly before his death, he omitted from the book all mention of Ludlow's name. When later Ludlow published his *Dramatic Life as I Found It*, he did everything in his power to blacken the reputation of his deceased partner, but he overshot the mark, and his attacks reflect more upon him than upon Smith. (Wayne Arnold, "Sol Smith: Chapters for a Biography," also manuscript collections in the possession of the Missouri Historical Society.)

⁸⁹ John T. Ford, lessee of the theatre in which Lincoln was assassinated. "John T. Ford, who leased and managed theatres in Washington and Baltimore, lived in the latter city." [Francis Wilson, *John Wilkes Booth, Fact and Fiction of Lincoln's Assassination* (Boston and New York, 1929), p. 108.]

⁹⁰ Funeral services for President Lincoln were held in New York on April 25. The following day the theatres, which had been closed since his death, were reopened.

of a sovereign than the burial of a murdered man. The day was fine. The sun shone out so brightly. The people (*that is the women*) were so gaily dressed—such pinks and blues and yellows—such roses and lilies—and the soldiers from the straggled length of the procession were compelled to walk so fast that it only wanted the bells to *ring* instead of tolling and the whole thing would have been changed. The procession was four mortal hours passing our windows although the head of the procession was considerably beyond our Hotel before it commenced moving. They had better have taken him straight from Washington to his last narrow home. To me there was something shocking in parading the poor decomposing remains through so many towns to be gazed at by crowds, too many of whom come to such sights as they would to a wax work show. I shall be glad when his body rests quietly in the grave.

They say that *two and twenty families*—servants children and all are in custody for having concealed Booth after the murder, and that there are now five hundred people under arrest as witnesses or accomplices. Reports say the trial is now going on *privately* and they are tried by a military tribunal. I never believe anything I hear however for the oddest rumors have been floating about. Indeed we have got so used to hearing *extraordinary news* that when my maid came to me in the morning and told me of the murder I smiled and said *what next?* The deep black margin to the newspapers told me that it was a terrible reality—The houses are still all draped with black, but with the exception of the gentlemen who wear crepe on the arm, there is very little personal mourning worn.—I beg leave to tell you *I* had that respect at once and put on "*decent mourning.*" I shall be glad indeed to see you and Mrs. Smith again and I hope St. Louis is not so *uncomfortably improved* as New York. I do not like it as well as the *old place*. It is now a city of strangers, so noisy it is like living in the London Strand. There are fine dwelling houses here now and they have got (what will be) a very nice Park—but I like my *old* Broadway. Your son who acts with us is a true Smith—and is *very attentive to business.*⁹¹

⁹¹ Sol Smith, Jr. "It was not my intention that any of my children should adopt the stage as a profession, but two of them have done so—Mark and Sol, Jr." (Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 221.) Smith goes on to say that Sol, Jr.

Do you think any of the Southern towns will be worth visiting next Winter. We would like to remain in the States until the end of next March if we could profitably make out our time as Mr. Kean would prefer opening in London in the month of May as *our circle* do not come to London much before that time—and although we should take just as much money at any other time Mr. Kean would like to see his *friends* around him on his return We shall I believe act here for one month commencing August 28th then go to Boston for twelve nights then to Brooklyn three nights and then to Philadelphia for five nights—beyond this we have done nothing because the London managers were fighting for us and want our answer and if we cannot see our way for the time up to the end of March or beginning of April we should steam home October 18. What is your opinion of some of the Southern towns by next winter? Write me a letter directed to Barnum's Hotel Baltimore.—We begin Monday week and act five nights—but if we are gone a letter would be forwarded.

Charles does not know I have asked these questions but I want to be *up in the matter* that we may take all points into consideration.

Our business here has been very fine 1984—next night *Very wet* 1600—1990—another wet night 1200—2049—1698—2000. Tonight my benefit will be great—and so will our last three nights.

I wonder whether Mr. De Bar will make ventures in Southern towns⁹²—Does not New Orleans belong to him At any rate let me have an Ans from *you*. And now old friend Adieu for the present.

Give our kindest regards to Mrs. Smith and believe me

Most sincerely

Ellen Kean

"has, at the time I write (1868), been on the stage about ten years, and is a good actor. He is now performing in New York City, but most of his experience has been had in the Western cities, Boston, and the provincial theatres in England." (*Ibid.*, p. 222.)

⁹² Benedict De Bar, known on the stage as Ben De Bar (1812-1877), popular comedian and manager, particularly successful as Falstaff. He was associated with Ludlow and Smith from time to time after 1840, and eventually bought out their interests in New Orleans. In 1865-1866 in addition to operating a theatre in St. Louis, he was joint manager with Edward Eddy in the management of the St. Charles in New Orleans.

Thursday May 4th
New York—

We conclude our eleven nights engagement at Cincinnati on Friday June 16th and will take the quickest and best conveyance we can find to St. Louis on Saturday 17th commencing at St. Louis Theatre Monday June 19th and ending a 5 nights engagement Friday 23rd. We then proceed to Chicago to open Monday June 26.

LVI

CHARLES KEAN TO MARY KEAN

New York 9th May
1865

My dearest Mary

The mail to-morrow will carry from Barclay & Livingston here to Coutts's a bill for £350 due in 30 days after sight. £50 of it goes to Dr. Joy on the 1st July, leaving £300 from which you will draw sufficient to pay all your bills. I hope that sum will more than clear you.

We closed here last night most *brilliantly* & thank goodness we have a few days rest which we all require. I have people in the room & can write no more.

Your affectionate
Father

LVII

CHARLES KEAN TO SOL SMITH

Barnum's Hotel—Baltimore
20 May 1865

My dear Sol Smith,

My wife has written you a long letter & told you all the chit chat I suppose, so with your kind permission I will confine myself more to business matters. In the first place will you tell me where I ought to sojourn while in St. Louis. People say the

Lindell House is the best Hotel—If you should happen to know the people will you make an arrangement for us. Here we live like Princes for \$28.00 per day. A fixed sum—Wines & drinks with washing extra. We have four bed rooms & a room for luggage with a *private* sitting apartment & meals served in that apartment. A cup of tea & bread & butter in the morning in bed rooms at ½ past seven—breakfast in private room at ten—Dinner ditto at ½ past three—Tea at six and supper on our return home *after the play*. Would you kindly speak to Mr. Debar about New Orleans. I do not want to return to England before the early spring but cannot delay to give my answer much longer to Mr. Vining at the Princess's, London.⁹³ I am desirous of a month's engagement in the South, & we could then, as in years *gone by*, return by way of the great river touching at Louisville—where we are not now going to act—Then perhaps a re-engagement or two at places where I am *now* about to visit would answer the purpose. I want to make all the money I can for our *retiring pension*—*January*, of course, would be the month for New Orleans—*Mobile*, I am afraid will not be sufficiently recovered to warrant a hope of a fine engagement. I don't want Mr. Debar to answer this letter to you. It will be time enough when we meet. The Varieties I hear is going to offer us an engagement but I should prefer the St. Charles. We leave this place on Friday next 26th for Pittsburg, where we open on the following Monday 29th & close on Friday 2nd June, so please drop me a line there to tell me about the Hotel.

Private

I do not wish Mr. Coppin to know anything about this New Orleans project of mine, so *Mum*, if you please & tell Mr. Debar to be equally silent on the subject, at least for the present.

We have been doing a very capital business here, but of course not like N. York, where we averaged \$2000 pr. night. Get this fact into your local paper, if you can & also the enclosed notice from the American Advertiser of this town. You see I write to you like an old friend which I shall always continue to be for ever & ever, Amen.

Most sincerely yours,

C. Kean.

⁹³ James Vining, manager of the Princess's Theatre, London.

LVIII

CHARLES KEAN TO SOL SMITH

Pittsburg, 29 May, 1865
St. Charles Hotel

My dear old friend

My wife says that she will write the letter for your son as she feels she can do it so much better than I can and as I put credit in her assertion I have resigned the pen to her.

The *Lindell House*, St. Louis by all means. *Four* bed rooms & an extra room for luggage—I don't see the object of a private room wherein we are to dine & I want to save not spend money—Only let us have nice *airy large* bed rooms & we shall be content. We shall arrive by the cars on Saturday evening as we propose leaving after the play on Friday night. The prospect here is *great*—May it be so every where till the curtain finally drops. *I cannot act* on the Saturday night in St. Louis opening in Chicago on the Monday—*My strength cannot do it*. I have refused positively to act *here* on Saturday. I will return in the Autumn or Fall, as you call it, if Mr. Debar will settle New Orleans. Who is manager of Memphis & Louisville? You can tell me all about this & other things when we meet. My daughter is *not* with us. She is living in England where she is made much of & goes a great deal in society.

We shall not do King John *this time*—We have not the dress with us.

Rejoicing at the prospect of seeing you so soon, I am as ever & ever, Amen.

Your sincere friend

C. Kean

Wife sends love.

They charge \$1.50 for orchestra chairs in New York at the principal Theatres—Why not then at St. Louis. Every seat here is taken for the whole engagement in D. Circle & part of family Circle at \$1 & 50 cents extra for securing seats. Why not then at St. Louis?

Sol Smith
St. Louis

LIX

CHARLES KEAN TO SOL SMITH

Burnet House
Cincinnati
Sunday, 4 June
1865

My dear friend

You need not be silent upon the New Orleans affair when you see Mr. Coppin, as I have broken the matter with him. So please tell the same to Mr. Debar & do not let any mention be made on the subject of *privacy* as I requested, to Mr. C.

We arrived here last night about 9 o'clock dreadfully tired & dirty. Pittsburg did its work well averaging in that little Theatre \$800 *pr.* night.

I do not know what we are going to do here, as the House is very large & the public well knowing that fact & that they will find plenty of room do not take places in advance either for Opera or tragedy, so I cannot give a conjecture as to the probable success here. This is the version given me by the managers Mr. Pike & Mr. Simmonds, who called this morning.⁹⁴ The former gentleman expresses an opinion of \$1000 *pr* night for the eleven nights & the latter says \$1500, which I at once dismiss from my mind. About \$800 is about the mark I think. In the month of June & an after season no bad average either.

The manager has quarreled with the Gazette here, a leading paper, for (as he states) copying the abusive articles from the N York Tribune against me & mine. The best of it is, if true, that this very man whose name is reported to me as Wood or Woods wrote them himself in the Tribune & had them recopied into the Gazette here, being on a visit to N. York while we were acting in that city.⁹⁵

What do you think of the Louisville manager refusing me my

⁹⁴ Samuel W. Pike built the Opera House on Fourth St. in 1859. He had been in the dry goods and, later, whiskey business. Simmonds has not been identified.

⁹⁵ Wood or Woods, unidentified.

terms?⁹⁶ Mr. Coppin wrote to him & also to Memphis from which last named place we have not heard yet, as soon as I told him concerning my New Orleans views. We finish here on Friday week 16th & of course shall start for St. Louis on Saturday. I hope it will be an easier journey than from Pittsburg for that did not at all agree with me. I was quite ill when I arrived.

Will you kindly tell Mr. Debar from me that I wish the four first performances announced in the first advertisements & bills Monday 19 Henry 8, ending with the downfall of Wolsey & the Comedy of the Jealous Wife compressed into 3 acts.

Tuesday 20 Mcht of Venice

Wednesday 21 Louis 11th adapted from the French—

Thursday 22 Hamlet

Friday 23 Mr. & Mrs. C. Kean's Benefit & Last night

God bless you—

Yours sincerely

C. Kean

LX

CHARLES KEAN TO SOL SMITH

My dear friend

I am at the moment in receipt of your letter dated 4th of June & hasten to inform you that the sudden set in of intense hot weather has done us great injury and I have proposed to Mr. Pike to relinquish the second week of our engagement, if he will give me five nights in the Fall if I have the time to spare. He has agreed to this, so I have written by this post to Mr. Debar offering to open with him if he thinks it advisable on Wednesday next 14, playing Thursday & Friday 15 & 16th omitting Saturday *rest* sake and then carrying out the five nights in the next week as originally agreed upon—I have asked him to telegraph back to me stating whether he accedes to this arrange-

⁹⁶ I have been unable to establish the identity of the Louisville manager referred to by Kean. Francis C. Wemyss in his *Chronology of the American Stage from 1752 to 1852* (New York, 1852), p. 183, lists a man named Coleman and Charles Parsons (part-time tragedian, part-time Methodist minister) as managers in that city, but which, if either, was in power in 1865, I cannot say.

ment, but since my present stay in America I have found the most difficult undertaking is to get answers from managers. They sometimes take not the slightest notice of any communication you make. Mr. Debar at this very time has left my agents last letter (Mr. Coppin) unanswered though it was on a matter of business.

Will you kindly therefore urge him to telegraph. A letter might not reach me in time. If you find any hesitation on his part will you kindly send me a word of electricity yourself & charge me with it on my arrival.

I never like telling Hotel Keepers how many persons compose my party or they will only give me what *they* deem necessary for my wants & not what *I* require.

Ever yours

Charles Kean

If we appear on Wednesday do urge Debar to get posters & bills out *at once*. If we open to a bad house the engagement is doomed.

Cincinnati—Burnet House
7 June 1865

LXI

CHARLES KEAN TO MARY KEAN

St. Louis—Lindell House
13th June 1865

My own darling girl

We arrived safely here yesterday about three o'clock having started from Cincinnati at eight o'clock the night before. We had better & more comfortable sleeping cars than from Pittsburgh to Cincinnati, but the travelling charges were nearly one third dearer—in fact everything is dear. Your dear mother took a stroll with me last evening & bought a pair of kid gloves for which she paid \$2.25—which in English money would be nine shillings—A bottle Champagne cost \$7 or \$8 which is equal to £1.8 or £1.12 which you can at home get for seven or eight shillings—I perceive by the papers of this morning that gold

has again had a considerable rise which is very much against me, as it requires so many more green backs to purchase a bill in London. For instance \$500 is in English money £100, but the price of gold being up I am obliged to pay, at the rate it stands at in the money market £142 for £100. The same increase also with my actors' salaries, that is in *proportion*—Fancy for a drive of two hours in an open carriage & pair I paid \$10 that is £2!!! and for taking us from the Hotel to the Railway Station £5 [*sic*] id est £1—Then carts for the luggage *beside*!!!

My hotel bill at Cincinnati *without* a *private sitting room* or meals served in your room which is always a very considerable extra charge amounted for eight days to \$305, that is £61!!!

“Think on that & shudder”

Besides having to pay so much we have to contend with rudeness & impudence beyond conception—and the “goings on” as our maid calls it behind the scenes is really shocking—nothing but *money* could reconcile me to remaining here at all. Nothing would tempt me to live in this country—and I am truly glad that you are not here to share our annoyances. When you ask a question people will not answer but never look up or take the slightest notice of what you say—They will always mislead you if they can. Jackson the maid asked 2 women she saw yesterday in this House standing together talking which was the way to the room where the servants & children dined—one of them pointed to a long passage & told her she would find it at the end but she could find no room of the sort—she was then told to go the other way which she did but was again disappointed & returning to the women once more was asked by them if she had found the room. Yes replied Jackson for you are standing at the door—These two women were positively standing at the very door for which Jackson was inquiring & sent her down two long passages on purpose to annoy & worry—

If you go into a shop nobody takes the slightest notice of you or asks what you wish—If you ask where you get gloves or any thing else the chances are you receive no reply till the question has been repeated twice or three times & then the answer is as laconic as possible—“Up there” “at the end” but they never tell which end. They see you looking about, but never will come to the rescue or offer to assist you.

The two pages in Hamlet the other night, young women about

22 & 23 years of age, went to Patty's room at the Theatre where a coloured woman was attending her hired for the week & told the woman that Miss Chapman wanted her at the back of the Stage which on being told by Patty was a mistake she hurried back & found these women in your cousin's room evidently bent upon stealing something—the mother of one of these beauties the following morning made her way into my dressing rooms, not seeing Jackson who was bending over a box outside in semi-darkness. She rose & followed her & found her in the absence of anything more valuable, rolling up my rough towels to carry them off. Her excuse was that she had mistaken the room for Miss Mitchells—

Poor Mr. Everett when he came to the Cincinnati Theatre one night locked his door at the Hotel & kept the key in his pocket—but on his return after the performance he found his door open & two handsome coats & a pair of trowsers stolen—It will cost him \$100 (£20) to repair the loss at the price of clothes out here.

Nobody in this country brushes your clothes & you are warned not to leave them outside your door or you are not likely ever to see them again. — — — —

God bless you my beloved child

Your affectionate

Father

LXII

ELLEN KEAN TO MISS MARIANNE SKERRETT⁹⁷

St. Louis
Missouri
June 22d, 1865

My dear Miss Skerrett

"Long looked for come at last" Here are my dottings down respecting our trip to Vancouver Island. We left the busy wicked city of San Francisco on the 1st December 1864 being engaged to stop at Portland in Oregon on our way to this "bright little isle of our own" The day was lovely and the sea was then calm. The passage however is anything but an agreeable one. All the Vessels running between San Francisco and Vancouver call at Portland for freight. It is a flourishing little town on the Willamette river, a tributary stream one hundred miles up the great Columbia river, whose waters flow into the Pacific. You have to cross a *bar* at the mouth of the Columbia which is the terror of all seamen. Our calm sea became very rough, and we were told we should not be able to attempt the bar, but must make straight for the Island. When we reached the dreaded spot all was so still and calm that we did not know when and where the danger was. We crossed it in some disappointment, for we expected to see something very fine. On arriving at Astoria twelve miles up the Columbia we saw what we *might have encountered* for the steamer "Sierra Nevada" was lying there being repaired having had her bulwarks carried away and being

⁹⁷ Miss Marianne Skerrett. "She was the Queen's first dresser, though she did not act as such. She communicated with the artists, wrote letters to tradespeople, etc. She entered the Queen's service almost immediately after her accession in June, 1837, being recommended to the Queen by the late Marchioness of Lansdowne. She was the niece of a Mr. Mathias, who had been sub-treasurer to Queen Charlotte. Her father was a West Indian proprietor. She is a person of immense literary knowledge and sound understanding, of the greatest discretion and straightforwardness, and was treated with the greatest confidence by the beloved Prince and the Queen, to both of whom she is devotedly attached. She retired from the Queen's service in July, 1862, having informed the Prince in the summer of 1861 that this was her intention, as she was anxious to pass the remainder of her life with her only sister. She frequently visits the Queen." [*The Early Years of His Royal Highness, the Prince Consort*, compiled under the direction of Her Majesty THE QUEEN by Lieut. General the Hon. C. Grey (New York, 1867), p. 276. Note by the Queen.]

otherwise seriously damaged in attempting the bar twenty four hours before. With what eager eyes I looked upon Astoria. It was to me like looking upon fabled land. As a girl I devoured all Washington Irving's books and his "*Astoria*" so interested me with all his wanderings in accompanying Mr. Astor's trappers that I then longed to be a man and a trapper too. Astoria then contained only one building—the *Fur depot* established by Mr. Astor who opened a trade with the Indians in opposition I believe to the Hudson Bay Company. Then the banks of the Columbia swarmed with Indians spearing salmon. Then Mr. Astor believed that the little town he was beginning to erect was destined to be the great city of the far west but the fatal *bar* destroyed his high hopes. So many trading vessels were lost in passing the mouth of the Columbia that the trade drooped and died and Astoria is now only an insignificant place where vessels wait for favorable weather to cross the bar. I saw the ruins of the old depot in the distance and one of the gentlemen gathered us some falling [?] moss from it as the mud was too deep even for an enthusiast to encounter. On the opposite side of the river lies what *some say* ought to be a portion of *British Columbia*, and about which there is some scandal concerning *forged maps*.⁹⁸ When high bred Englishmen undertake to arrange this sort of business it would be well if they carried in their train a few lawyers known in England as *sharp practitioners*. The Columbia is I think the noblest river I have seen and its well wooded sloping banks and jutting rocks covered with rich green moss were delightful to our eyes after the everlasting brown of all the country around San Francisco, while the background of a fine range of hills with three towering mountains capped with perpetual snow made the scene truly magnificent. Two of these mountains were especially fine—Mount Helena, and Mount Hood. The former a sharp broken peaked mountain with a delicacy and elegance of form beautiful to behold—the other a broad based solid mountain looking like a gigantic alabaster Pyramid.

We arrived at Portland late in the Evening and mistaking the light on a steamer for the wharf, we ran aground and had to

⁹⁸ Mrs. Kean obviously knew little about the diplomatic negotiations by means of which the Oregon boundary dispute had been amicably settled in 1846.

remain until the morning. We found a very fair Hotel, and Portland a pretty flourishing town in spite of the *bar*—steamers manage the passage better than the former little sailing vessels and Portland carries on a considerable trade in grains fruits and vegetables. They have two crops in the year and as everything here is oddly named, they call this second bounty of nature the volunteer crop. Mr. Kean saw the manager Mr. Potter on our arrival who amused him with the following story.⁹⁹ Mr. Potter went to a coloured barber to get shaved and during the operation read aloud from a newspaper of the preparations they were making for the Keans in Vancouver Island. Having finished he said "What will the Keans do here?" *Nothing*, the man replied. *Nothing?* said the astonished manager. *Nothing*, the man repeated. "*Minstrels won't go down here* we've had enough of 'em." Everything was conducted in the most primitive style. The band played *outside the Theatre door* for half an hour like Richardsons show at a Fair¹⁰⁰—and then the doors opened and they played in the orchestra. The Theatre was small but the charge very heavy, *twelve shillings sterling for each person all over the house* and they managed to get two hundred pounds into that little place. We left Portland on the 8th and on my way to the steamer I bought a worsted cap, for the cold was intense. The woman who served me had on a really handsome pair of diamond earrings and a *big diamond* on her finger—not a cluster but one big stone. She was a Jewess. The general display of diamonds in this part of the world is really extraordinary. A diamond ring appears to be as essential to a decently dressed woman as a crinoline. Every dirty hand sports a diamond. We recrossed the bar in a calm. On Friday 9th we arrived at Esquimalt the landing place for the steamer and drove four miles along an excellent and pretty road to Vancouvers capital. We found good rooms ready and a very comfortable

⁹⁹ J. S. Potter (Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 230.)

¹⁰⁰ "Richardson's show at a Fair." "Richardson's Show' was only one of the many Theatrical Booths set up in fairs and similar gatherings all over England, during the years when theatres were few and far apart. . ." (Sherson, *op. cit.*, p. 329.) It "differed from the other great theatrical booths. It certainly catered for a class of audience who were content with dramatic fare and talent of a lower order, and only insisted that there should be a drama in which a ghost appeared at least twice, and a pantomime in which they could laugh at some of the more showy tricks." (*Ibid.*, pp. 330-331.)

Hotel kept by a demonstrative frenchwoman who evinced her joy at seeing us by giving Mr. Kean continued thumps on the back. At three o'clock a deputation waited on us to welcome us to the Island, and then we walked out to see the little town. Victoria looks like a toy capital. Funny looking little wooden houses—and wooden roads—and wooden pavements—and pretty little wooden cottages and villas all about. The next day Saturday we dined with his Excellency who turned out to be an old friend of my husbands. He was the handsome man of the regiment (11th foot) when Mr. Kean knew him in 1836—He is still a very fine looking man and Mrs. Kennedy and her daughters are very amiable and agreeable.¹⁰¹ Vancouver Island however is a sad banishment for a governors family. They had a few of their nicest people to meet us but the house is so small that they can scarcely seat a dozen people at dinner and twenty persons around the little drawing room. There is no Government House and the people are not disposed to build one. The former Governor (Douglas) was a very *rich* man¹⁰²—he built himself a house and did not trouble the Islanders, but when *poor* Governor Kennedy came he had to put up at an Hotel, and after a deal of jarring as to whether they or the Home Government ought to provide a dwelling for their Governor, they engaged this little St. John's Wood looking Villa.¹⁰³ A pretty place enough if it had been larger—with a peach orchard in front of it.

The Governors secretary is married to a daughter of Sir Henry Bishop the composer.¹⁰⁴ A plain likeness of her good looking father and a very ladylike woman. Patty enjoyed herself thoroughly while at Victoria, and saw much of the surrounding beauty of the country as she rode out almost daily with the Governor and his daughters. She rode for miles she told me on a brown moss grown road, wooded on either side with

¹⁰¹ Cf. note 81, Letter L.

¹⁰² Sir James Douglas, K. C. M. G. (1803-1877). "Appointed Governor of Vancouver Island 1851. Appointed Governor of British Columbia 1858. Commission as Governor of Vancouver Island expired 1863; succeeded by Capt. Arthur Kennedy, C. B. Retired as Governor of British Columbia 1864 and was succeeded by Frederick Seymour." (A. S. Paterson, H. B. M., Consul, St. Louis, Mo.)

¹⁰³ Small detached houses like those in St. John's Wood, a residential district of London.

¹⁰⁴ Sir Henry Bishop (1786-1855), English composer. He wrote the music for a number of ballad operas including John Howard Payne's *Clari, the Maid of Milan*, in which "Home Sweet Home" is a solo number.

stately Pines and Furs so tall that they gave entire shade—while the undergrowth was an entangled mass of wild rose shrubs, and in the summer mingled with these, are exquisite wild flowers as thick as a close packed bouquet. Miss Kennedy told me that when they arrived in the spring that the whole Island was like a flower garden—and the hills instead of being green, were like a rich turkey carpet *many colored*—the patches of flowers being so large as to make the colour quite plain even in the distance. The climate is delightful—never colder than an English winter—and they have six months of certain clear blue sky with just an occasional refreshing shower, while in the warmest weather they have a pleasant cool breeze from the sea or the hills, and the sight of the snow capped mountains are always pleasant to behold. All that is required to render the place enjoyable is *society*, and it certainly does want a dozen good families to settle there before it is endurable as a residence for a Governors wife and daughters. The people are *entirely respectable*, but decidedly *plebeian* and *narrow minded*. They formed a great contrast to the people we had just left and it really was quite charming to see a young girls eyes droop when you looked at her. A San Francisco girl would outgaze the rudest man without a thought of being immodest. A few naval officers, travellers and Hunters enliven the Island now and then but when the Admirals wife is away there is little or no society for Ladies. I suppose it is so in all newly settled places but I believe the men growing tired of lonely homes, have married any honest girl who could keep his house clean and tidy, prepare his food and meet him with a smile of welcome. This has given a low tone to society and the letter *h* is at a discount. Lindley Murray is so little respected that had we remained there long we should have forgotten our English.¹⁰⁵ A Bankers wife told me the *ouses* looked nice when the *Hivy* was green and I heard the following speech from the Mayers wife to a young naval officer at a Ball Only to enjoy the story you must pronounce the word put to rhyme with shut. “Now Mr. Ooker, you’ve put me down for two *darnces* as you’d no right to—and if you put me down now for the sixth waltz its about as much as ever I can do for you.” They say Governor Seymour was exceedingly

¹⁰⁵ Lindley Murray (1745-1826), celebrated grammarian.

amused when he passed through the Island—when his host getting out of patience with a man engaged to help wait at table made some terrible blunder.¹⁰⁶ When his host threw up his hands and said aloud in his agony—“That barber does everything wrong and my five dollars are thrown away.” but they say he nearly went into fits when the Chinese boy brought in coffee *stirring it with his finger*. They certainly do require a few women of the better class to give tone to society. They are modest respectable people—but very underbred, and of course the men are not improved by such associations. Poor Governor Kennedy has no easy time of it. The members of assembly, or whatever they call them, are slow, and self sufficient and from what I could learn lose sight of a great end and impede improvement by fooling each other. They are at a perfect stand still. Nothing is progressing. They say there is no depth in the soil for agricultural purposes—but surely there must be for *pasture*—their hope is in the mineral resources which are not yet fully developed. They *import* their *grain* and *fruit* and *vegetables*—their exports are at present *coal* *timber* and a *little gold*. Admiral Denman left for Valparaiso the day we arrived and the “*Tribune*” commanded by Lord Gifford was the only war vessel left in Vancouver waters¹⁰⁷ We were surprised to see her *men* such *boys* and on enquiry we learned that the “*Tribune*” sailed from England with forty of her men whose service was up on their arrival at Vancouver Island. They were of course of no use either to their commander or to the nation that sent them, and were consequently *sent back*. Forty more deserted. They have only to cross to Washington Territory which is American soil, and they can easily earn seven or eight shillings a day as Sawyers, which they gladly take in exchange for an English sailors scanty pay. So that what men the “*Tribune*” had when we left were principally boys of fifteen. Indeed it is impossible to keep our sailors in any port where the English language is spoken. The Americans pay their seamen and I believe *feed* their seamen so much better than we do that they desert in dozens whenever they get the chance and the Americans are always on the look out for them. At the close of the war here they had sixty thousand seamen two thirds

¹⁰⁶ Frederick Seymour, appointed Governor of British Columbia in 1864.

¹⁰⁷ Unidentified.

of whom were *british*, and it is a great mistake to think they would come back to their allegiance if war with England broke out. *They would not*. My husband has always taken great interest in these matters—he talks to the men and hears a great deal from them of their feelings and their views. I remember years ago his talking to one of these Anglo American sailors and he said “Do you mean to tell me that you would fight against your Mother country?” “I would fight against my *Mother* if she didn’t feed me.” was the mans reply. *And so it is*. Nothing but *higher pay* will keep the English sailors true to the English flag, while the Americans offer them such temptations. Jack cares nothing for a pension—he looks to his immediate *pay*. Besides Lord Gifford the Island was enlivened by Mr. Shelby the traveller—he left for England during our stay but I think he will depart for the Wilderness again—he appeared to be stifled by civilization.¹⁰⁸

I should have told you that there is one great draw back to people settling in Vancouver Island—the difficulty of procuring servants. The people would gladly give thirty thirty five or even forty pounds a year to strong English girls willing to work and do as they are bid—but they have resisted the exorbitant demands of sixty seventy and seventy five pounds a year for raw Irishwomen who do little and know nothing. All household work there is done by Chinese boys who are at least civil and obedient. The mistress of the house however has much to do *for herself*.

We played a very great engagement in this lovely Island and departed on Friday 23d. The weather was then calm but it soon began to blow furiously and we had misgivings about the dreaded bar. All Saturday night we almost remained stationary—we could make no way against the heavy wind and wild seas. We had one old Lawyer on board, a *General in a militia regiment* who was frightened out of his wits. He told me he had had a vision of an Owl and a cat in his cabin and he knew they were *ghosts* come to warn him of some danger. I suggested that they might have been the ghosts of a tough beef steak but I could not remove the old mans fears and when we arrived at the bar he was really very ill. In truth we beheld the bar in its wildest mood. The breakers broke like an immense encampment dancing—or like hills of snow in perpetual motion.

¹⁰⁸ “Mr. Shelby the traveller,” unidentified.

It was an extraordinary sight. The preparations for passing were really startling. The Captain was lashed aloft on one mast—the Pilot lashed on the other. The 1st Mate was lashed on the upper deck—two men were lashed at the wheel, and ropes were fixed to the rudder and three men were lashed on each side to work the Vessel by the rudder should the wheel break. Then two men were lashed forward each with an oil can. Now I had often *heard* of “*pouring oil on troubled waters*” but I had always considered the meaning of it to be figurative—but we saw it *literally done*. As the wild waves rose at the side of the vessel these men poured a *little oil* on them, and instead of towering up and *breaking* they subsided and slid away. I never beheld anything so wonderful. Had it not been for these extraordinary preparations I would scarcely have realized any danger, for we were but fifteen minutes making the passage across the bar and we seemed to go smoothly enough. The Captain however told me that our dangers were *hidden* and that there was no weather when it was entirely safe. This trip will live in my memory as associated with two events, *the passing the bar in rough weather* and *meeting Mr. Comstock the great gold finder*.¹⁰⁹ And I must tell you all about him for he

¹⁰⁹ Henry Tompkins Paige Comstock (1820-1870). He came of a good Connecticut family and was born in Trenton, Ontario, because his father, who was in the hotel and lumber business, happened to be living there at the time. “The Grosch Brothers of Philadelphia are commonly credited with the first discovery of silver in Virginia City, but they met an untimely death before the world had become acquainted with these happenings. Possibly Comstock learned of the ledge from them. At any rate, after their death he claimed by right of discovery and previous location the ground where the Comstock lode was found.” After leaving Nevada in 1862, he “seems to have followed the life of a prospector and road-builder in eastern Oregon, Idaho, and Montana.” He was killed, perhaps murdered, near Boseman, Montana. (Jeanne E. Wier in the *Dictionary of American Biography*, IV, 333.) “Peter O’Riley and Patrick McLaughlin were in fact the practical discoverers of the Comstock lode though the name and fame went to Henry Tompkins Paige Comstock. . . . By sheer force of a loud voice and some cunning understanding of human nature, he had made himself a figure in the rough community. . . . It was possible that Comstock had posted a notice claiming the land for agricultural purposes. Men of the time were always posting such notices and never having them recorded or securing title. It was a fact that Comstock, with Manny Penrod and Old Virginia had bought the water and some old sluice-boxes from a miner named Caldwell the previous year. But it was also a fact that he had never recorded the title to the water rights. . . . Comstock’s tall figure and sanctimonious dignity impressed the ignorant newcomers who soon began pouring into the district. They accepted him at his own valuation as a man of great affairs.” [C. B. Glasscock, *The Big Bonanza: The Story of the Comstock Lode* (Indianapolis, 1931), pp. 39 ff.]

is what the Americans call "a *remarkable* man." He is a tall slender man fifty five years of age but looking quite ten years younger than that, he has a peculiarly intelligent watchful enquiring blue eye—a good countenance with a benevolent mild expression. He is a Canadian by birth. He was left an orphan at ten years of age and not knowing what to do asked some Trappers to allow him to accompany them in an expedition. They refused thinking him too young—but the entreaties of the child prevailed and at length they took him with them. In his own words "*from that time he took to the Wilderness and the study of the language of nature. He knows nothing from books. Gods works have been his guides and they are never failing.*" He says "When I am in cities I do not know what to do or where to get anything. In the wilderness I have everything to my hands." I do not think he can either read or write, but he is a very extraordinary man. To his indefatigable searching they owe the discovery of nearly *all* the great mines in this country. The great Comstock lead and the Washover mines they owe to him—and almost all Virginia City by right belongs to him, but he is an oddity and does not care for personal gain. To *discover* is his passion. He believes it to be his mission to unfold the riches of the earth for the benefit of mankind and as soon as he sees one discovery developing itself he is off on another search. He discovered silver mines in Mexico and he told us that he knew of wealth in the British possessions (to use his own words) that would pay off the national debt in one year. He said he was convinced that we possessed some of the richest spots in the world for minerals and he wished he could get permission to explore the country. I imagine he alludes to British Columbia as I hear he had lately been in that country. Mr. Kean asked him why he did not apply to our government. He said he was aware that so many impracticable schemes were laid before them that they would look upon him as a mere enthusiast and nothing would come of it. "What do they know of Comstock?" he said, but if they would let me have a little vessel and forty picked men (for I must reach the place by water and have protection from the natives) I would show them riches that would *astound* them. He said that if he got the least encouragement to believe that he would be listened to he would go to England and explain his views and plans. Had the Duke

of Newcastle been living Mr. Kean would have written to his Grace as the proper channel through which such matters are arranged, but he does not know Mr. Cardwell and he did not like to intrude himself into the affair.¹¹⁰ He did write to Mr. Gladstone but it is not in Mr. Gladstone's province and so I fear the whole thing will drop through. Is it not a pity now that all this vast wealth should slumber with its accompanying temptations for emigration to our own possessions? British Columbia wants population and would not a prolific gold mine set in a tide of emigration there. The Americans are rapidly peopling the *Pacific slope* which means all their country on the Pacific side of the Rocky mountains and the sooner we can populate British Columbia with our own people the better. If we do not, the Yankees will do it for us. A sprinkling of them is all very well—they are excellent pioneers and Melbourne owes them much, but we do not want to be *overrun* by them. I wish I was a *rich* woman—if I were, I would fit out Mr. Comstocks expedition myself and make a glorious present to my country, but as I am not a rich woman I wish I could put this man of the Wilderness in communication with those who would on the part of the nation make this small venture for these great results. And now what am I to say about this side of the Rocky mountains I would require the deep thought of a wiser head than mine to give an opinion of what must be the end of all this cruel strife. I will tell you what I see and hear and you must form your own conclusions. Among the masses of *Young America* and among the *Irish* there is a bitter feeling against England and a howl for *war*.¹¹¹ And it is really absurd to hear them talk of the English aristocracy. Every evil that is supposed to affect England or Ireland—everything that in any way works against the views of these madmen is attributed to the British aristocracy. *They* it is who would keep the slaves in bondage. *They* (jealous of American greatness) caused con-

¹¹⁰ Edward Cardwell, later Viscount (1813-1866), Secretary for the Colonies in Palmerston's cabinet.

¹¹¹ A Mr. Seymour Fitzgerald having stated in conference that war with the United States was probable and that the defences of Canada were inadequate, "Mr. Cardwell stated in a very satisfactory manner the course pursued about Canadian defence, and said that relations between England and the United States are at present friendly." [*Queen Victoria's Letters, 1862-1878* (London, 1926), I, 262. A letter from Palmerston to the Queen, dated March 13, 1865.]

federate vessels to be fitted out. The Americans all admire and respect the Queen and they never associate Her Majesty with either her ministers or her nobles. The Queen is a pure noble lady, but they *seperate her entirely from her state*. If however they could hang all the British aristocracy on one rope I think they would do it. Now on the other side I have heard even *Union men* say *sadly* that the *Republic is gone*. I have heard men say that the British constitution was the best and safest in the world. I have even heard regret expressed that *America ever broke from England*. How different this is from the tone of anybody twenty years ago! I hear men say that the troubles of the North are not yet over, they are only now beginning, and I hear in many ways that *another struggle must come*, and that the country is destined to break up into many parts. The taxation is enormous, and the Irish grow troublesome. "Sure then they're going to tax our graves now" said a chambermaid to me yesterday. "After all we've suffered in the old country we're like to be as bad off here." There is a deadly hatred growing up on the part of the Americans towards the Irish. They know them to be a mischievous race—and their rapidly increasing numbers has made the Americans determine to *keep the Irish down*. Here is a nice little element of strife for them. Certain it is that despotism reigns everywhere and discontent sits brooding. This is not felt in New York where the people have all grown rich and are now revelling on the winnings of the War, but now the War is over the people in other parts expect a relaxation of that military power that could enter a house in the middle of the night and take a husband from the side of his sleeping wife not to be heard of for six months after, but these things are still sometimes done and the Venetian Council of ten could not do it better. People now learn to hold their peace or falsify their real sentiments until they get hold of an English person and then they pour their grievances forth. The coloured people too are causing anxiety—the poor creatures do not understand their newly acquired freedom which they interpret as *having all their own way*. We hear news daily of collisions between blacks and whites and of mutiny in the coloured regiments and I expect the poor wretches will some day be massacred in their vain and ignorant attempt to do something

desperate. I just enclose something from todays newspaper that will give you a notion of the feeling that exists.¹¹²

After we arrived in New York I wrote to you soon after the Presidents death. We played a wonderfully fine engagement there and then proceeded to Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and to this place St. Louis. Our engagements are very great although we are out of season. We leave on Saturday morning at six oclock for Chicago and shall visit Cleveland Milwaukee and other like towns—pay a short visit to Canada—see Niagara Falls and probably return to New York by way of Saratoga. I have however a sad disappointment for my darling Mary—We shall not be home as soon as I expected. Papa will write to her not by this mail but by the next therefore do not say anything to her on this subject until he has told her all. I think our return is now settled to take place in April. The sudden close of the war has opened the southern towns and temptations are offered in the way of engagements. As this is our last visit Mr. Kean does not like to leave a certain large sum of money behind him that cannot be got hereafter. And having made such sacrifices he feels it unwise to leave anything undone for the sake of a few more months. Mary is a sensible girl and will see this but this *hope deferred maketh my heart very sick*. Now it really is settled and there will be no further delay. Mr. Kean is now writing to Mr. Vining of the Princesses Theatre arranging our opening night in London.

Good bye God bless you my dear Miss Skerrett

Give our kindest love to the friends you know we love and believe me

Yours affectionately
Ellen Kean

News has arrived here of the death of poor Mrs. Seward She had low fever and weakened poor woman by nursing and by her late anxieties has sunk [under] her attack.¹¹³

I have told Mary of our stay until April.

¹¹² The clipping was an article from the *St. Louis Republican* headed "A Terrible Threat." It contained quotations from a speech by R. H. Cain, a colored preacher in Brooklyn, threatening a revolution in the South and intimating that a massacre of the whites might result if the Negroes were disfranchised. The editor apparently did not take the threat very seriously.

¹¹³ Mrs. William H. Seward, wife of the Secretary of State. Although ill at the time, she had nursed her husband after the attack made on him by Lewis Powell (alias Payne) on the evening of President Lincoln's assassination.

LXIII

CHARLES KEAN TO MARY KEAN

Now Miss Kean read the enclosed & having well digested the same, let your friends have a slice off the same cake.

The business here continues *great* & we expect to night \$1200 to Hamlet & to-morrow Ricd 2 & a repeat of the Jealous Wife for Benefit there is no saying what we shall have—The Theatre will be tested to its fullest capacity—

A brother of Charles Dickens who is *settled* here with a wife & four children called upon us today and asked us to dinner—but we are too much engaged to accept his hospitality—He has taken the oath of allegiance to the U. States & is no longer a British subject.¹¹⁴

We don't get many calls in this country, and Patty is disgusted, for she has no balls—no parties—*no flirtations!!!* and that is the unkindest cut of all.

Fancy she engaged a woman in the Theatre to help her to dress as we have now only one maid servant. This woman was one of the *cleaners* and came to Patty's room, announcing herself as "the *lady* that was to help her dress"

After the first night she refused to come any more as the *salary* was not sufficient \$3 pr week (twelve shillings English) !!!

¹¹⁴ Augustus Dickens. "The reason he [Charles Dickens] did not wish to visit that city [Chicago] was because his brother Augustus was living there 'with a very handsome woman.' In the house were two children whom Augustus rather believed to be his own." [Thomas Wright, *The Life of Charles Dickens* (London, 1935), p. 329.] John Forster asserts that Augustus was one of the novelist's younger brothers. [*The Life of Charles Dickens* (London, 1874), II, 356.] He is presumed to have died in America.

In a letter opening "Dear Madame" (unsigned, but undoubtedly Kean's draft) the following passage appears. "You will perceive that all the morning papers are warm in our favor with the exception of the Daily News, from which source I of course never expect any quarter as it is under the same proprietorship as my inveterate foe Punch, & the theatrical notices are written by Mr. Hogarth, the Father in law of one of the Heads of my opposing Clique, Charles Dickens." Dickens was a close friend of Kean's contemptuous rival, Macready. Letter in the possession of the author.

I wish we were safe back again—I am afraid there is going to be a great deal of trouble in this country—

God bless you my child

Your affectionate

Father

Chicago
29 June
1865

One of the papers here speaking of Patty's Dauphin in Louis XI last night says

"Miss Chapman's pretty figure was much *applauded*"

What do you think of that for criticism?

LXIV

ELLEN KEAN TO MR. AND MRS. SOL SMITH

Dear Friends

We have just concluded a most brilliant and agreeable engagement here and the houses have averaged \$1206. per night. We liked the audience and we found the actors *perfect* in the words and *very obliging*. We return here and act at the Opera House next Saturday and Monday from which MacVicker has great expectations¹¹⁵—And we act an engagement here of 12 nights commencing October 23rd. We are enchanted with the beautiful city of Chicago. It is perfectly lovely, and they tell us that Cleveland is still more beautiful. We start for Milwaukee tomorrow morning and act there the same night—hard work for people of our tender years, certainly too for Mr. Kean who is not as strong as I am.

My daughter writes in good spirits but we have as yet not

¹¹⁵ James H. McVicker, pioneer Chicago manager. He opened his first theatre in that city—on Madison Street—in 1857. In 1837 he had moved to St. Louis and worked as a printer on the *St. Louis Republican*. Becoming interested in the Ludlow and Smith productions, he secured a position as call boy with their New Orleans company in 1843. Later he became an actor and alternated between performing (chiefly in Yankee roles) and management (for the most part in St. Louis) until he went to Chicago in 1857. (Ludlow, *op. cit.*, pp. 732-733.) He was the father of Edwin Booth's second wife, Mary McVicker.

heard from her since it has been settled that we prolong our stay. She is however a strong minded little lassie and will submit with a good grace to what is inevitable. She is surrounded by friends who make her time pass as pleasantly as it can in our absence and God willing we shall be all once more united in "the merry month of May." I look forward with pleasure old friend to seeing you again so soon and *then* if we meet again (which I hope we shall) it will be in Old England. I shall let you know how we go on in our present tour and will certainly write as soon as our next New York engagement is over. I long for our weeks rest at Niagara for this hot weather and these heavy engagements are not to my taste.

Give our kind love to Mrs. Smith and
believe me

My dear old friend

Yours sincerely

Ellen Kean

Sunday
July 2 [1865]

LXV

CHARLES KEAN TO MARY KEAN

New York—1 Sept. 1865

My dearest Mary

. . . . We are almost helpless from the heat

Your affect. Father

C. K.

Besides the Hotel bill I paid this morning I have paid ten pounds English for the carriage—A heavy washing bill—& my assistant actors salaries—amounting altogether to \$650 which in English money is £130.

Pretty well for one week. I may need have large receipts.



MR. CHARLES KEAN.....
MRS. CHARLES KEAN, [ELLEN TREE].

Petty Chapman

*(Courtesy of the Theatre Collection, Harvard
College Library)*

LXVI

CHARLES KEAN TO MARY KEAN

New York 12 Sept. 1865

Dearest Child

I have answered Mr. Barrow's letter & have offered him £100 *additional*—£50 to be paid in Feby & the other £50 after my arrival in London, or he can have the whole £100 in Feby. if he prefers. Mind *you* see to this—It is a large sum, but I grudge nothing where the comfort or pleasure of my darling girl is concerned. Another mail is in, but not a line from Mrs. Young of Russell Squ. about the brooch & earrings. *Have you given them?* If so, why this silence?

I am not well & have hints of gout, produced by worry and annoyance. Mr. Cathcart is at his tricks again—He is drinking hard & getting his imbibing friends to interrupt the performance by uproarious applause for him. In fact instead of being what he is engaged for a comfort and support, he is a nuisance & a discomfort to me. His head is turned by injudicious friends & he is now as inflated as a balloon.

My left hand is very queer to-day & there is a touch of my old enemy just under my left toe in the hollow. I hope it will not increase & I do not much think it will.

Your dear Mother & myself have sat to the first man here as a Photographer & he certainly has succeeded wonderfully in taking a *picture*, for I can scarcely call it anything else of your Mamma sitting & your Papa standing by her side. He has succeeded to my heart's content in taking a portrait of your mother with your bonnet & gown. My portrait was a failure, so I am going to sit today provided I can get my left shoe on. The two together will be \$100 that is £20 and each portrait \$50 that is £10—I have bought them for you so that you may have them to look at in remembrance of your parents when they have passed away from this world. Do not have the box sent in the country to you lest some injury might occur. I think you will be charmed with them.—I should like Miss Skerrett to see them & if possible to show them to the Queen. . . .

Your photographs will be sent by the Scotia to-morrow week the 20th I think it will be. Capt. Judkins has kindly undertaken

to convey them safe to Liverpool, where they will be in ten days after they leave the Port of New York, & then to forward them to the address in London. Now prize them as you would the apple of your eye for I shall never be able to give such another present. They are *yours* entirely & if I ever have a House of my own they must be hung in *your own private room*. They are the gift of a Father to his beloved Child.

Mind you pay up *all* the bills at Xmas provided Mr. Shannon has sufficient funds at his command to meet the current expenses. I do not wish to arrive in the Spring & find myself £200 or £300 in debt Take care of that for me.

Breakfast is announced so I must conclude with a prayer for your happiness & health.

Your affectionate old Father

LXVII

CHARLES KEAN TO MARY KEAN

N. York 8th Oct 1865

My darling Mary

I sent Mr. Broadhurst of Hunt & Roskell a kind of sketch *to be improved upon* & to be sent back to me for my inspection and approval before the *real* necklace for your mother's silver wedding is commenced. My idea was to present her with something that might have more reference *to the occasion* than the drawings contained which were forwarded to me. Mr. Broadhurst has not answered my letter enclosing the card I had sketched and I am anxious to know if he received it? Let me know.

Mr. Halifax or rather his brother has written to me stating that the six copies of my little 2 vols. Shakespeare, intended to give to friends here, had been sent by the Steamer of the 16 Sept. That Steamer has arrived nearly a *fortnight* and I have not heard about them! very strange.

I enclose you my address in New York on the night of my Benefit there over a fortnight since. There is nothing in it only that you might like to read these things. I spoke a few words

in Boston but I have not seen a Boston paper since I spoke there, so cannot tell whether it has been inserted or not—

I am very anxious about lodgings in London. We should require them from 9th May until the 27 June—*Harley St.* is where I wish to be—any where in the neighbourhood of Cavendish Squ. or of Portman Squ. provided that the Street is quiet & not a thoroughfare, for I should not as you well know, like a crowd to collect to see a *lame old man* mount his horse. I should then have to forego the horse altogether. Mind you pay Nancy's passage money in due time or she may not get a good berth. . . .

Remember all I have written to you *about the Chapman tribe*. God bless you my beloved one.

Your affect. Father

LXVIII

ELLEN KEAN TO MARY KEAN

Philadelphia—La Pierre House—
Oct. 15, 1865

My darling Mary

. . . . We shall be considered a couple of doodies by the smart people here. The only really well dressed women I have seen are the relatives of Dr. Henriquez—the family who gave us the floral ship.¹¹⁶ They were all dressed with such simplicity, costly material plainly made. The only objection was the diamonds and pearls in the ears paying a morning call,—but you get quite accustomed to that and if they are of modest size they no longer shock your sense of propriety. Louise is looking well fat and happy.¹¹⁷ She does not like the Yankees but is very happy in the pleasant life she is leading. People are *calling on her*—(a great event in the life of a young girl) She rides with her uncle—sits in the *Prince of Wales Box* at the Theatre and Miss Louise Barrow is somebody I assure you in Philadelphia. . . .

I dread the long journey to Chicago. Your Father and Patty will be like two tired spoilt children—and I shall be the worse

¹¹⁶ Examination of the Philadelphia city directories for this period has failed to reveal a Dr. Henriquez.

¹¹⁷ The same is true in the case of Louise Barrow.

for the shaking six months and *then*—"Home Sweet Home." We are now knocking off the weeks as school girls do the approach of the holy-days—It is now six months from the time of sailing by the time you receive this it will be four months and a half and so it slowly steps away.

Monday 16th

We are sitting at our drawing room window seeing the great procession of Firemen congregated from all parts. It is the Firemens convention. They are very fond of their gatherings in this country. The clerical convention is just over and a Bishop was turned out of the sitting room to make way for the actor. The Parsons had no procession but *this* is really a wonderful sight. They say it is fourteen miles long and giving two thousand men to a mile that would give twenty-eight thousand men but I believe there are more. The sight is very pretty from our window as they form from our street and go up on one side and down the other thus so that one sees each company twice. Almost every company has a poodle dog. Doggies duty is to wake the firemen by barking when the firebell rings which he does *religiously*. These dear animals are to-day as white as snow. Their *after parts* close shaven and they are clothed in handsome scarlet body cloths, and garlanded with flowers. One company has a goat walking with them—and one a white rabbit in a gilded cage with a wreath of flowers round its neck. I suppose these two last are animals saved in some fire and kept as pets. The doggies look wonderfully proud and knowing. The procession has been walking since a quarter before eleven and it is now $\frac{1}{2}$ past one "and the cry is still they come," and this is no funeral march but a good quick step. I sleep in the front of the house and I have heard them arriving all night. Parties of twenty and thirty went tramp, tramp along the streets and people were arriving at the Hotel all the night through. I believe it will last until five o'clock and in the Evening there is a private meeting of Fenians. . . . I wish we were safe at Chicago. I wish we were safe back in the North and ready to start home. I am so weary of this constant work and travelling. The last man in the procession has just past—it is three o'clock and now the crowd is dispersing. My head aches with the constant din of brass bands. We had Europe Asia Africa and America *in Costume* We had Penn and the Indians and we had a Lady

well in years who stood in a car drawn by five white horses abreast dressed as Columbia.

Tuesday 17th The papers today teem with fenian abuse of England.¹¹⁸ Ireland is to be free and a republic, and perfidious England is to hang her head in shame. I hope all this will be over before we return or it will play the mischief with our engagement then. Goodbye God bless you my darling I shall be only too delighted to get away from this barbarous place.

Love to all—

Your affectionate Mother

Ellen Kean

Don't forget the dolls for Coppin's children—*three* dolls.

LXIX

CHARLES KEAN TO SOL SMITH

Chicago, 3 Nov. 1865

My dear Sol Smith

I wrote a business letter the other day to Debar respecting the pieces we ought to play during our final engagement at St. Louis which as you know commences Monday 27th November. I have since heard that De Bar is in N. Orleans. Would you kindly tell the acting manager or man of business to open my letter & act upon it. If I remember rightly Mr. De Bar fixed on *Hamlet* for the opening play which I wish to be followed by *Macbeth*—*King Lear*—and *Richard III*d. Is *Saturday* a good night in St. Louis because if the business this time is creditable, I could act on that night as well, thereby finishing on the 3rd December instead of the 2nd Mr. Coppin has left me for Australia via England & Mr. Brough is now my Agent on a *weekly* salary. We have been doing wonderful business in the Atlantic cities. Twenty four performances in N York—Broadway Theatre—averaged \$1200 pr night

¹¹⁸ "Fenian Brotherhood" was the name given an Irish-American secret society, the purpose of which was to achieve the independence of Ireland and the establishment of a republic in that country. It operated openly in the United States, even making plans for actually attempting a raid into Canada. American officials seem to have winked at its anti-British activities, at least until the invasion of Canadian territory had been made and come to grief.

Twelve in Boston \$1430
 Three in Brooklyn \$1550
 & five in Philadelphia \$1680!!!

Can you manage to get these facts inserted in some good St. Louis paper—receipts such as these are stronger proofs of popularity than a library of laudations. Here we have had wretched weather. Parepa's opposition as well as Heller's—but still we have capped \$800 pr night.¹¹⁹ We conclude here to-morrow night & open in Detroit on Wednesday next 8th where we play five nights. My address will be there Biddle House.

We are then three nights at Cleveland & four at Columbus arriving (D V) at Lindell House—St. Louis on Friday 24 or Saturday 25th Nov.

My poor wife reappeared here last night having been confined to her bed for a week with chills & fever. We had a smash up on the railway coming from Philadelphia but thank God nobody was killed. All unite with me in kindest regards to yourself & Mrs. Smith.

Ever yours sincerely

Charles Kean

LXX

CHARLES KEAN TO SOL SMITH

Detroit
 10 Nov—
 1865

My dear Sol Smith

A 1000 thanks for your kind & welcome letter. This opera opposition to my *farewell* nights in St. Louis is a horrid bore & must of a certainty diminish our attraction, although my pres-

¹¹⁹ Euphrosyne Parepa di Boyesku (1836-1874), operatic and concert soprano. She was born in Edinburgh of Wallachian parentage. She married Carl Rosa. In 1866 she toured the United States under the management of Maurice Strakosch and Hezekiah Bateman.

Probably Robert Heller, who seems to have alternated as a magician and a pianist. (Odell, *Annals*, VII and VIII.)

ent Agent, Mr. Brough, says it will not! but I don't believe him.¹²⁰

Coppin sailed for England on his way to Australia by the mail Steamer of 18 October.

I am so sorry that your son has found a difficulty about his engagement—Exeter is however a very charming Town surrounded by lovely scenery and many places of interest. Mr. Belton is, as times go, a very respectable man & a good actor (*stock*)¹²¹

Would you mind a week before we act in St. Louis putting into your papers an advertisement at my expense to the effect that

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean
are engaged to perform at Mr. De Bar's Theatre a
Farewell
engagement of five night previous to their return
to Europe there to take leave of the British Stage
Monday 27 November
Tuesday 28
Wednesday 29
Thursday 30
Friday 1 December

You can copy the bottom portion of the enclosed advertisement of the Tribune of this day's date here—if you prefer it.

We leave on Tuesday morning for Cleveland where we act three nights & open for four at Columbus on Monday 20th.

All join in kind remembrances to Mrs. Smith.

Yours ever

C. Kean

¹²⁰ William Francis Brough (1798-1867), Irish basso. He made his American debut at the Park in 1835. In later years he acted as manager for various stars. (T. Allston Brown, *History of the American Stage*, p. 49.)

¹²¹ Kean is evidently referring to Sol Smith, Jr. (Cf. note 91, Letter LV.) Fred Belton was an English actor who supported Kean from time to time, and with whom he apparently was, at least in his last years, on terms of close friendship. "He left his widow, daughter, and niece amply provided for, nor did he forget me, for, to my surprise, he left me his immense and valuable wardrobe, chains, crowns, jewels, robes, dresses, and swords, with the request that, if none of them were good enough for my acceptance, he wished me to destroy them—thus increasing their value by a compliment as delicate and refined as he was great and polished." (Fred Belton, *Random Recollections of an Old Actor*, p. 233.)

LXXI

CHARLES KEAN TO SOL SMITH

Cleveland

17 Nov 1865

Thanks my dear friend for your letter recd. last night and for the pleasing intelligence that we are not to be opposed by Grove's Opera in St. Louis.

I have no recollection of receiving any letters from you when I was last in Cleveland—I am sure I should have acknowledged them, or my wife would have done so had any reached me.

Our house last night was \$800 The Washington management where we were engaged for a fortnight commencing on 19 Febr has burst up.

We shall be so glad to see you again.

Ever sincerely yours

Charles Kean

I hear that Cairo is a wretched place. Neil House—Columbus from Monday till Thursday next week will be our address.

LXXII

CHARLES KEAN TO SOL SMITH

My dear Sol Smith

A Mr. Flynn manager of Nashville has come to the rescue & gives us an engagement at Louisville commencing on Monday 4th December & at Nashville the following week beginning 11th December, so this relieves me from "readings" in Kentucky & will give me much more money¹²²—I have written by this post to Debar telling him that as his letter conveyed no intimation of his acceptance of my offer to act on Saturday 2nd Dec. I took it for granted that he did not entertain the idea & had consequently made arrangements to travel on that day.

\$975 to Macbeth last night. One of the papers here the

¹²² Mr. Flynn not definitely identified.

"Leader" is making daily onslaughts on me & my wife—They say the Witches last evening gave great satisfaction but this was chiefly owing to Mr. Kean having nothing to do with those scenes!¹²³

I hear that our prospects in Columbus are very bad. We begin there Monday next 20th.

Hoping to see you on Sunday 26th & with kindest regards to Mrs. Smith from all of mine believe me

Ever sincerely yours

Charles Kean

Cleveland

Saturday

18 November 1865

¹²³ Criticism from the *Cleveland Leader* of November 17, 1865. "The play of 'Macbeth' is perhaps the most striking in its dramatic effects and tragic power of all Shakspeare's creations, and upon the character of 'Macbeth' depends almost entirely the effectiveness of the play. Power, force, dignity, are the characteristics of the part, and no actor who is not able to supply in the fullest extent these requisites, can give a proper impersonation of this great creation. Mr. Kean, we feel bound to say, does not possess this ability, and as a consequence his rendition last night was, to use no stronger term, a failure. We watched attentively, from the opening to the close of the play, the performance of the character of 'Macbeth,' torture though it was, and we are compelled to say that a more thorough misrepresentation could not have been exhibited by the veriest amateur. Schoolboy declamation, passion wasted in whisper, inspiring sentences mouthed off with utter puerility, misapplied action, and stale mannerisms innumerable, were the features of Mr. Kean's rendition, which transformed 'Macbeth' into a burlesque making us to believe that Shakspeare had drawn the character rather of a blustering buffoon than of a heroic soldier, filled with high aspirations, commanding respect by his dignity, and possessed of many noble qualities, though misdirected by ambition and the influence of a bad wife. There was no power and no effect in the 'Macbeth' of Mr. Kean, much as there is in that of Shakspeare, and though there were occasionally a few in the audience who could discover some point that deserved their commendation, the greater part of the acting of Mr. Kean fell upon his auditors as though it had been the whistling of the winds. We know, in thus writing, that we question the ability of a man who has a wide reputation in his profession; but we are free to say that in whatever way he obtained it—whether upon his own past merits or those of his really great father—there is nothing in his present acting that in the remotest degree justifies it, and if he desires to maintain his fame the sooner he makes his farewell to the stage the better."

Attacks of a similar character had been levelled at Kean in Australia (Sillard, *op. cit.*, II), but there they had grown in part at least out of a controversy with Barry Sullivan. The fact that the reaction to his performances was very different in other cities, notably New York, suggests that possibly this vehemence may have been motivated by a personal grudge on the part of the writer.

LXXIII

CHARLES KEAN TO SOL SMITH

Nashville—10 Dec 1865

My dear Old Friend

You will be pleased to hear that we did *very* well in Louisville. Our first night was \$735 & our last \$920. Richard III drew about \$800. The other two nights were about \$600 each—but oh such a company! Never in all my experience did I ever meet with such a set as in Louisville & Nashville. Here we have not done so well. The Gallery folk stay away & we act entirely to the Circle & Parquette.

King Duncan told my wife to go to Macbeth and “teach him 2 bid Heaven thank him” A young lady who appeared through the cauldron & ought to have told me about “Birnam Wood & Dunsinane Hill” said or muttered something about Bernal Hall, burst out laughing & disappeared. The Ghost in Hamlet was so drunk he could hardly get through the part & the same man last night was obliged to take off the dress of Cardinal Campeius [in *King Henry VIII*] from intoxication. My Mr. Everett went on for the part doubling it with Surry.

The Birnam wood messenger in Louisville never spoke at all & amidst laughter & hisses left the Stage without apprising Macbeth of the extraordinary sight he had beheld while keeping watch—Our best House here has been just \$600 and our worst \$350, but the cold has been intense and brought back my poor wife’s rheumatic pains. Brough is in bed all day from the same cause.

I alone keep up well & strong. My wife does not know that I am writing or I know that she would send her love to you and Mrs. Smith.

Goodby old friend for the present. We leave for Memphis on Wednesday morning 20th & start from there to N Orleans on Tuesday 2nd Jany

Yours ever sincerely
C. Kean

LXXIV

CHARLES KEAN TO MARY KEAN

New Orleans, Louisiana

7 Jany. 1866—Sunday

My dearest Mary

We finished up at that horrid place Memphis on New Years evening, last Monday, & returned to our supperless rooms at the Hotel to be called for the first Steamer that might pass for this place—Both Mama & myself were terribly fatigued & we found ourselves attacked by a severe cold & hoarseness through dressing at the Theatre in damp rooms. The building itself is erected in a swamp & the dressing rooms are down below where the water was dripping down the walls—

At five o'clock on Tuesday morning we were aroused by a heavy knock at our door when a rough man with a Lantern appeared & exclaimed in a loud & threatening voice—"If you are going by the Olive Branch she is in & you must get up directly"

In less than an hour we were all on board of this splendid boat with a cabin or saloon 300 feet in length. Mama & I had a nice Stateroom between us, Patty & Jackson shared another. We found ourselves much better fed than at the Hotels where we had lately sojourned. But I soon discovered that your poor dear Mother was seriously ill. There was no medical man on board & she was obliged to trust to her own judgment & use the best remedies she could—Patty supplied both me & her aunt with some homeopathic powders which I think did our voices good—One night Mama was so bad that I was really alarmed & thought she would be choked with the quantity of mucus in her throat. We had luckily fine clear weather & no fogs so we arrived safely at N. Orleans on Friday night last at 10 o'clock (5th Jany.) I immediately sent for a Doctor but in vain—He had left his office & they did not know there where his private residence was! Fancy that! I then sent for another residing in this Hotel the St. Charles, but he excused himself because he was in bed & had lately a domestic affliction. I made two more efforts but all in vain. Next day I got into conversation with an English gentleman who recommended me a Dr. Angel (homeopathy) & he has seen her once. He pro-

nounced her throat to be acute bronchitis, with a tendency to croop. He also said that he did not think she had quite got over her intermittent fever in Chicago & that she must watch herself to see if the chills returned every three days, for that would be a certain proof. To-morrow is a holiday here in consequence of the repulse of the British Army under Genl. Pakenham (brother in law to the great Duke of Wellington) who was killed in 1815 here. The battle was fought seven miles below the Town & but for mismanagement on our part would not have been lost. Old Cole was there as you know. Well as they keep up the memory of this day & shops are shut & everybody is free to go where he pleases, the Theatres are sure to be all crammed & if we cannot act it will be a great loss. The Dr. is to be here at eleven & it scarcely wants half an hour of that time, so we shall hear what he says & I shall abide by his verdict. She is evidently better & sometimes speaks like her old self, but then a hoarseness returns & frightens us all out of our senses. I am a great deal better but fear when the passionate scene with Tubal in the 3d Act is over my voice will be no where for the Trial in the fourth. This is a large Theatre & will consequently be trying. There is an Opera here & two other Theatres besides the St. Charles where we act. The Town has enlarged since I was here 20 years ago.

As a general rule the people appear more *civil* here than we have found them elsewhere. On our arrival they put us into two moderate sized rooms very Frenchy & what do you suppose they charged for them including board—that is going to the public table \$65 pr. day—that is in English £13 daily—What do you think of that? Mr. Everett & Mr. Cathcart could not procure a closet even in the House & were tramping over the City for two hours & a half before they could find a coal skuttle to sleep in. I need not tell you that the following day we moved up three flights & are comfortable “fixed up” as they say here with our four rooms all adjoining for which I pay one pound English a day for each room (£4 in all) Poor Jackson was sent up to the garret where she found a wretched apartment with scarcely any furniture or convenience, & what little there was was broken. The floor covered with cockroaches & other insects invited there by the half eaten bones strewed about the floor. The poor girl went to bed & was soon aroused by knocking at

the door & a summons to open. She declined—but “you must let me in” said the voice outside—“but I won’t” answered Jackson. “Oh you won’t won’t you” & round rushed the person from without & sprang through the window which was in a passage. “Are you white or colored?” said the advancing black woman “White” said Jackson. “This is my room” said blacky & “There are three more of us besides sleep in that bed” “Oh” said Jackson “then I will be off”—got up & dressed & came down to Patty & slept on her sofa. Is not this too bad considering I pay for the maid the same price I pay for myself or Mama?

The Doctor has just left & says he would rather postpone giving a decided opinion about your mother’s acting until to-morrow morning. There is no doubt the windpipe is affected. My throat he says is very much relaxed & he is to return in a hour & paint it with iodine.

We are not so much annoyed with the spitting & hawking here as we have been in other places. In some towns where we have been, printed placards tell the people not to spit against the walls or on the floors. In the Houses of Legislature at Nashville, Tennessee, such boards were put up in every visible spot for the benefit of the members of the State Parliament, & rows of “spittoons” as they are called were ranged down all the passages & staircases. I have positively seen *ladies* use them—and I have seen them do *worse* than *that*—I see poor Governor Eyre is much blamed by many journals in England for his energetic conduct in putting down the Jamaica rebellion.¹²⁴ It is very easy for people sitting with their families by their domestic hearth in peace & safety to talk about the barbarous murders that have been committed on “the poor blacks.” If Gov. Eyre had not acted as he did, not a *white*, man, woman, or child would have been alive in a week afterwards.

Mr. Cathcart has just called in to inquire about Mama so I have asked him to post this letter for me and as he is waiting I will write no more now. God bless you my Child & I trust in a

¹²⁴ Edward John Eyre became Governor of Jamaica in 1865. Finding the financial situation of the local government very serious, he imposed new taxes and thus caused great dissatisfaction on the island. On October 11 the Negroes at Morant Bay started an insurrection which was not put down without considerable bloodshed. As a result, Governor Eyre was recalled to England.

day or two I shall be able to give you a good acct of your dear Mother's health & also of your affectionate Father's

Charles Kean

....

LXXV

CHARLES KEAN TO MARY KEAN

New Orleans—17 Jany 1866

My darling Mary

To-morrow's Sun will bring about the anniversary of your Father's birth. I shall be 55! I am going down the hill my dear child and for the few years I have before me, may I always have *you* with me when this day comes round. It will be a sorrowful birthday away from home—away from my dear child—All around me ill & depressed, your poor mother's cough is very bad & she has unfortunately caught a fresh cold. As she recovers from one attack, some other illness or ailment takes its place. Patty too is far from well & even Jackson looks ill & worn. I am in great trouble about my teeth which are held on & secured by the last double tooth on my left side. This is now hanging by a bit of skin & I live in momentary fear that it will drop out. I have seen an *English* Dentist today & he says this wretched tooth must be extracted & Sunday next 21st at 9 o'clock in the morning, is fixed for the operation—He will then & there take a wax mold of the upper part of my mouth & make me a piece to hold in by suction and promises that he will have me ready for the dinner to which we are all invited at ½ past 3 o'clock. I am to be in the room the whole time while he is working at these said teeth so I shall take a book with me & remain in his company from nine till three—So you see I have all this horror before me to endure. I could heartily wish that I could have held on with what I have got till I saw Crampton but I find it is quite impossible to delay longer lest the tooth drop out while I am engaged in acting—

Thank goodness in the midst of all our troubles we are doing very good business. Our Houses up to this have averaged close

on \$900 a night (£180) and to-night the Box plan promises *greatly*. We finish here Friday week 26th inst. & on Monday 29th we commence a weeks engagement at Mobile.

A passenger train on the Johnsonville and Nashville Railroad was precipitated through a bridge, at Livingston Springs, on the 7th, and it was feared that all on board were lost.¹²⁵

May we not be thankful that Providence has watched over us so fondly in our long pilgrimage round the world & saved us from such a disaster as is here described. We came by that road & must have crossed the very bridge that has now sent so many people to their long rest. At Louisville where we acted a few weeks since there has been a dreadful fight between two families in which about sixty persons were engaged—several deaths & more wounded was the result. In this country children are taught to use the knife & a Father boasts that he brings up his son from the earliest age to understand that if he receives a blow from any one & he is not able to beat him he is then & there to *knife* him as they call it here—that is to draw his knife & stab the person—This was told me by an American because I complained of two little children playing with a musical box worth about £20 I said it ought to be taken from them as they were injuring it. They seem here throughout America to have no heed whatever of health or life—They wash the Stage of the Theatre on a Sunday morning at 10 o'clock & make the actors rehearse at eleven as they act here on the Sabbath—One man is dying from the cold he caught under these circumstances being in infirm health when it took place—But this is no warning to the managers—They continue the same process every seventh day & oblige the Performers to rehearse on the wet boards—It is every where the same—At the barbers shops at midday they throw buckets of water over the floor while you are being shaved—and laugh at you if you complain of the danger it may entail—They do the same thing at the Hotels and Chambermaids (Irish savages) will come into your room while you are writing or reading and therefore abstracted in mind—throw open your windows without your leave or without a word & begin sweeping away, sending the dust all over you and your papers or any dresses that may be lying about. If you remonstrate they are

¹²⁵ A newspaper clipping pasted on the page.

impertinent & tell you they cannot wait, that it is their day out & they must get over their work—There is no remedy—you must bear with it or seek an asylum elsewhere for the time. It is the impudent manner in which they do these things & answer you that is so annoying—A chambermaid or the Bell boys as those are called who come when you ring, or rather *ought* to come, never make the slightest way for you if you meet them in the passages or lobbies—You have to give place to them—They never address you with respect & call you “Sir” or “Madam” a fellow will walk into your chamber after you have rung your bell four or five times with a rude swagger & a loud demand to know “What do you want?”

The climate here is so changeable that one day I wear my great coat & two waistcoats. The next is wet & muggy—the third fine & bright—the Fourth so hot that you can hardly bear a cloth coat at all—We hear that in the North the weather is intensely cold & sailors & passengers from Europe arrive frost-bitten—There have been many frozen in death in New York & Boston.

I do not know what we shall do after Mobile—We have four weeks free, till we appear in Baltimore on the 5th March, caused by the managers failure where we were engaged at Washington. If somebody else does not open the doors for us in that city I think I shall return here & go up the Mississippi to Cincinnati & there take the rail to Pittsburg where the manager is very anxious for us & then proceed after acting a few nights to Baltimore—for the Southern railways are terribly rotten & dangerous—I am sorry to lose Washington for we should have done well there & I was anxious Patty should see the Capital—I should also have much liked to have seen Hield’s [?] married daughter who is there with her husband who holds an official position at our Embassy¹²⁶—Going up and down the great river in their splendid Steamers is very pleasant travelling and carries with it no fatigue—When we came down from Memphis we had 600 mules on board and as we landed them in detachments in various stations it was amusing to witness the delight of the animals feeling that they were on terra firma once again—Some laid down & rolled over & over—Some kicked for joy & jumped about

¹²⁶ Kean’s handwriting here is not clear. He may be referring to William Hield, an actor.

as if they were crazy—but the majority scampered off as fast as they could as if racing one another but the owner would tinkle a little bell & they would stop on the moment listen with upraised ears and gallop back as fast as their legs would carry them

Fancy the usual pieces they act here on Sundays are Jack Sheppard & Black eyed Susan. The actors I understand are paid extra for doing it.

This day thirteen weeks we shall be on board the Cunard Steamer destined for Liverpool—Oh would that day had come! I wish you would give Dr. Joy a cheque for certain payments he has to make for me before you come down to see me in Liverpool.

In the last scene of Louis XI Commynes has to give despatches to Pages and he says to one, "Give this to the Duke of Orleans instead of which the actor here said "Duke of *New Orleans*."

I shall leave this letter open till to-morrow in case I have to add anything.

LXXVI

ELLEN KEAN TO SOL SMITH

St. Charles Hotel
New Orleans
Jan. 17th 1866

My dear old friend

You expressed a wish to know how we got on in New Orleans and I should have waited until the close of our engagement had not a circumstance occurred to make me feel so angry that I sit down to unburthen my mind to you. Our engagement with Mr. De Bar at St. Louis, and elsewhere, is a *clear half nightly* of the *gross receipts*. After the first performance here in paying Mr. Brough our agent, there was an attempt to stop half the tax from our share. When Mr. Brough showed the agreement signed by Messrs. De Bar and Eddy with the words a clear half of the *gross receipts* and further said "We did not pay it in St. Louis in our two engagements there but Mr. De Bar is on

the stage go to him and he will satisfy you that I was right."¹²⁷ After this we were paid correctly each night until after Mr. De Bar had left for St. Louis. Then young Mr. Eddy read a portion of a letter from his father who is at Mobile (anticipating Mr. Keans playing there) stating that he had got a letter from Mr. De Bar informing him that he (De Bar) had only paid half the tax in St. Louis and that Mr. Keans name was still on the assessor's books for the other half. Young Mr. Eddy further stated that he was instructed to say that if Mr. Kean did not pay the tax the engagement would finish on the following Friday—that is cutting our engagement short one week. Seeing that there was an inclination to be not only insulting but unfair and inscrupulous we thought it better to pay the tax with a protest and get through the engagement as quietly as possible. This occurred on Monday morning. Yesterday (Tuesday) Mr. Brough came with a message from young Eddy and the manager wishing to *reduce the prices*. Mr. Kean said "Not on any consideration—The prices were put up *by the management*—and having begun so, we must go on. The strength of our houses are in the *dearest places*—viz. the dress boxes—which are always full. Reduce your prices and you will reduce your receipts—I cannot consent to it." Just as we were about to go down to dinner the stage manager Mr. Davy or Davis made his appearance at our bedroom door and in a cool quiet unpleasant manner said "*The engagement being so bad that as Mr. Kean objected to altering the prices, perhaps he would like to cut the engagement short one week—for they were losing money*—Of course Mr. Kean will do nothing of the sort.

I here give you our returns leaving out the *odd cents*

Monday 8th	1082	Thursday, Jan 18th	\$1017 last
Tuesday 9th	1107	night and according to my reck-	
Wednesday 10"	756	oning this brings the average	
Thursday 11"	675	to close on 895 per night—	
Friday 12"	877	<i>Shocking bad houses are they</i>	
Saturday 13"	705	not?	
Monday 15"	928		

¹²⁷ Edward Eddy, actor and manager. Among the theatres he at one time or another directed in New York were the Metropolitan, Burton's Chambers Street, the old Bowery, and the old Broadway. For a number of years he played under Ludlow and Smith in New Orleans. At the time of the Keans' last visit to that city, he was joint manager with Ben De Bar of the St. Charles Theatre.

Now you will find this makes an average of over \$860 per night. And I ask you as an old Manager if such houses gave any warrant for this insult—Mr. Brough tells us that Mr. Hackett is in the town and that he *hears* Mr. Hackett has offered to play a week sharing after \$250 per night, and so thinking that they *might* make a little more by this arrangement these *high minded gentlemen* have sought to provoke Mr. Kean into throwing up our last week.¹²⁸ I cannot and I do not believe that Mr. De Bar has in *any way* lent himself to their outrageous conduct. As to Mr. Keans name remaining on the assessors books it is too absurd for a child to believe. Tax gatherers are neither dilatory or indulgent and it is not likely they would have allowed Mr. Keans name to be on their books for two engagements without calling for a settlement. Mr. De Bar knew that Mr. Kean had nothing to do with the tax (and as I understand) very properly returns the amount *he receives* for taxation, and not the portion the star takes as that never reaches him. It has all been malicious and gratuitous insult *intended to annoy*.¹²⁹ We had wet weather on some of the nights—and had two weak plays "*Much Ado*" and "*Stranger*" which were put up on my account chiefly as I came here with acute bronchitis, and have acted at the time at a risk and in suffering. Last night we had 870 second night of Louis XI.

Oh! for the good old times when we used to walk down to the Theatre for the pleasure of meeting your good natured upright countenance and of devouring good Mrs. Smiths brandy peaches. There were no such misunderstandings then—no quibbling about taxes or insulting of stars on \$860 houses. It is Lear to night, on Friday we do Henry 8th and Jealous Wife for my benefit—and on Saturday Richard III—so that certainly our average will keep up this week and I have no fear of next week. Now what do you say to this old friend? What will Mr. De Bar say to

¹²⁸ James H. Hackett (1800-1871), American actor and popular star about the middle of the nineteenth century. He was famous for his Falstaff, and also for his native American character parts. He was one of the first to play Rip Van Winkle. He aspired to tragedy, but failed to make a very favorable impression in that field. He was the father of James K. Hackett.

¹²⁹ Examination of the assessment book for 1865 stored in the attic of the Municipal Courts Building, St. Louis, shows that the taxes were paid in full by De Bar, and that the Keans' names are not listed. (Letter of Mr. Horace Grimm, State Supervisor, *Historical Records Survey*, October 27, 1939.)

such behavior from his partner? This day thirteen weeks we sail for England—next week we shall be out of our *teens* and then the weeks will drop away rapidly. We get the most delightful letters from our daughter and the most gratifying accounts of her from our friends. We get the most genial jolly letters from our English Manager welcoming our return with promises of enormous business. All important engagements are made out for our whole two years and we have only to fill up some little intermediate gaps that the smaller managers will fight for. We return in the spring of the year when nature will smile upon us—and I think we shall all go wild with joy when we set our feet upon the Liverpool landing. Independent of my gladness to get home I shall in truth be glad to get away from a sight which grieves my heart—the *sad alteration this cruel war has caused throughout the country. Places are changed less than people.* If it were not for yourself and a few old fashioned folk who used to write in their books “Honesty is the best policy” in good sound texts I think I should have run away and left Master Charles and Miss Patty to get on as they could. I do not recognize the United States I visited in 1838.

God bless you old friend and keep you and yours in the health and happiness the integrity of your mind has won for you.

Love to Mrs. Smith

Yours sincerely

Ellen Kean

Turn back to the account and you see an addition—

LXXVII

ELLEN KEAN TO SOL SMITH

ST. CHARLES HOTEL
NEW ORLEANS

Jan. 20 1866

My dear friend

I here send you the exact figures of our engagement up to last night *Friday 19th January.*

Mon. 8th	Merchant of Venice	1082.25
Tues. 9th	Hamlet	1107.50

Wedn. 10th	Much Ado	759.75
Thurs. 11th	Stranger	675.
Friday 12th	Louis XI	877.75

I look upon this as a great night *sacrificed* for it was only announced as Mr. Keans benefit on the day of performance—without our knowledge or consent.

Saturday 13th	Merchant of Venice	705.50
Monday 15th	Macbeth	982.75

an unsatisfactory return

Tuesday 16th	Louis XI	874.75
Wed. 17	Lear	1017.75
Thursday 18	Hamlet	621.75
Friday 19	My Ben. Henry 8 & Jealous Wife	1278.

You will find this gives an average of a little over \$900 per night. Judge our indignation when in the face of such receipts we are told this morning that a letter has arrived from Mr. Eddy Senr. (who is in Mobile) directing the prices to be put down here next week to the ordinary standard.

It is literally taking a good thousand dollars from our share, and of course at a corresponding loss to themselves. This cannot be mistaken policy for the *impolicy* of such a step is too apparent. Our \$900 will shrink to \$450. There must be some bad feeling in it. It must be to gratify the malice of a vulgar mind. No complaint has been made about the prices—they paid their two dollars cheerfully—and it was this portion of the house that made our receipts tell—for you know we were never people for the galleries. I really think that with such a partner Mr. De Bar should have remained in New Orleans until our engagement was over—I do not think we should have been left in the power of this unscrupulous person.

Mr. De Bars *highest expectation* was \$1000 per night—and we have taken over \$900 per night—and if the last few nights had been properly announced *retaining the high prices* I have not a doubt in the world but that we should have reached the sum he named \$1000 per night.

Sunday 21st \$930 to Richard 3rd last night and *not a very satisfactory return*. So you see the average kept up. I am now waiting to see the morning papers for until I see it announced I cannot believe that malice will be indulged in at such a cost.

Papers just arrived. I enclose the announcement from the Picayune. Old prices resumed.

Let me hear what you think of this scandalous behavior. What will Mr. De Bar say to it? Will he be content to lose a thousand for the sake of insulting Mr. Kean? In my long theatrical experience—I never met with anything so outrageous.

I imagine it is done for the purpose of making those at a distance believe that our engagement broke down. It must be some sort of petty spite—unless the man is mad.

Now do write to me and give me your thoughts upon it.

Kind love to Mrs. Smith.

Charles is quite ill from worry and annoyance.

Yours sincerely

Ellen Kean

LXXVIII

ELLEN KEAN TO SOL SMITH¹³⁰

My dear Friend,

I send you the result of Mr. Eddy's ignorant folly and malice.

542 last night instead of 900—or 1000, and a different class audience. Vulgar, noisy, and dangerous. We could not venture our usual effects, as at any sudden outburst, or even strong point, we were imitated in the gallery or Upper Boxes. The play was the "Gamester." Actors and public hold up their hands in astonishment at Mr. Eddy's incomprehensible conduct, and ask "What can be the motive?"

The annoyance has made us both very ill and I have just dispatched a note to Dr. Angel to see if he can do anything to relieve Mr. Kean as he has Lear to do tonight—I think it is a heavy bilious attack—The doctor has been and says it is disordered stomach occasioned by worry and want of rest. I have just been applying fomentations of hot whiskey by the Doctors order to relieve his pain and this with other remedies he has advised will I hope put him right for the evenings work. He gets to bed as early as he can after acting but he gets no sleep after four in the morning. A Nigger comes at that hour with

¹³⁰ This letter was obviously written on Tuesday, January 23, 1866.

a cart full of oysters and *bawls* the whole time he is shoveling them out. At six o Clock there is general call for "Maggie" which lasts until our cup of tea comes in at seven. Then he gets up *unrefreshed*. At four o Clock he lies down *wishing to sleep*—but a one-armed sweetheart then commences *his* call for "Maggie," and this with the variation of a tin cart drawn rapidly along the passage by three or four children, in no danger of *lung* disease, lasts until it is time to go to the Theatre I still suffer much with my throat Would we were in England and all were well!

5 o'clock. Charles much better. It is a fine night and from the hit *Lear* made when we did it last we ought to have from 800 to 900 in the house which will slither down to 450 or 500 at the uttermost Indeed no one can tell how these last five nights properly announced might have been. Never mind old friend. A thousand dollars will not prevent our retiring in comfort far out of the reach of any vulgar jealousy when we may sit and laugh at all these petty troubles and when we will often drink a health to honest Sol and his worthy family.

Wednesday. I had to send for the doctor on reaching the Theatre last night—Charles was so ill. He gave him opiates to relieve the pain and he got through wonderfully. The result of the prices as I expected—505. People coming with their two dollars in their hands and having one returned to them. It is literally closing your pockets and saying money shan't come in. My dear Husband is better today but very weak "unfit for his own purposes." It is *Macbeth* tonight. I do not care what is in the house. We can afford a few hundred dollars quite as well as Mr. Eddy can and I hope his loss will be considerable.

Kind love from all

Yours sincerely

Ellen Kean

LXXIX

CHARLES KEAN TO UNIDENTIFIED CORRESPONDENT

St. Chs. Hotel
N Orleans
9th Febr
1866

My dear Sir

I shall be much pleased to see Mr Barrett & yourself to-morrow morning at eleven o'clock if you will do me the favor of calling at our room 382.¹³¹ I shall then have an opportunity of wishing you farewell—a long farewell—that is until our Greenwich dinner takes place. I have heard “golden opinions” of Mr. Barrett as one of the promising rising actors of the day. I regret that I have never seen him, but be assured he has my best wishes—

Yours most truly

C. Kean

We leave N Orleans to-morrow evening at 5 o'clock—*for ever!*
What a fearful sound that has—It is the knell of death

LXXX

ELLEN KEAN TO SOL SMITH

Louisville
Thursday Feb. 22d [1866]

My dear friend

I dare say you are wondering why I do not write to let you know how all went in Mobile. In truth I have been very ill having suffered from acute bronchitis for many weeks. I am only now *beginning* to recover. We played an enormous engagement in Mobile the houses averaging close on 1400. I am really ashamed to tell you how little we profited by this brilliant time. Mr. Kean was really seriously ill in New Orleans—partly brought on by annoyance—he had a return of the malady that nearly cost him his life in Sydney—He was lying in great pain with

¹³¹ Almost certainly Lawrence Barrett (1838-1891), who later became one of America's leading actors. He had interrupted his career on the stage to serve in the Union Army, in which he rose to the rank of captain.

fomentations of hot whiskey and muslins on him when Mr. Brough came to tell him that Mr. King one of the Mobile managers was in New Orleans and wished to see him.¹³² *"I am too ill"* was the reply—do you see him for me—Brough came back saying that Mr. King talked of keeping the prices low as he feared the engagement—*"He cannot do that"* said my husband *"The prices are fixed by agreement."* Mr. Brough replied, *"He says not"* *"Show him his partners letter You have the engagement,"* said Mr. Kean No! said Brough I have every engagement but that. *"It is very strange (said Mr. Kean) that Mr. Coppin should have neglected giving that with all the rest. I remember the letter well and the prices fixed upon."* Mr. Brough said *"Mr. King denies that such a letter was ever sent."* He went back to Mr. King and returned saying *"Mr. King says as you object so to altering the prices will you sell the engagement"* *"Dont do that Charles (said I) stand your chance. What will he give said Mr. Kean "\$1700 said Brough "I wont take it (said my husband) but I will take 2100. I said "Charles I never like these certainties."* I had occasion to leave him but Patty was with him. In my absence that old fool—or worse—or both—persuaded my sick husband to take \$1800 and sign the agreement in spite of poor Patty's entreaties. Brough said *"My child it comes to the same thing—He will lower the prices—The house will hold little more than \$600—The town is very poor—"* and so when I returned the deed was done. Now had Mr. Brough like an efficient agent looked over his engagements and finding one missing had communicated that fact in calm moments a little reflection would have suggested a search among Mr. Keans papers—but standing by a sick mans bedside for an *immediate answer* as Mr. King had to *leave by the boat* this was not thought of and so in a few hours after the deed was done Patty found the letter of engagement in Mr. Keans large pocket book.

Had Mr. Brough like an efficient agent made *any enquiry* he would have found without difficulty that they had done *great business* in Mobile ever since the close of the War—and he would have known had he been on the alert—(or *true*) that every place was taken for *all our nights* before Mr. King left Mobile. It was all a *low trick*. Whether he is fool or knave I cannot say—

¹³² Mr. King, unidentified.

but most surely he is no safe agent and we had far better have been without him. Mr. Coppin with his enormous percentages was not more expensive than Mr. Brough Mr. Kean when he got well was very angry about it—and asked him why he did not make enquiry upon a fact that seemed to be known so well to everybody viz. the prosperity of the Mobile Theatre. Why come to him with expression of fear for our success upon the representation of one man who was interested in what he said—He *thought* we should do badly was the reply—but I said “Mr. Brough it is our agents business to *know*, and you might have known had you taken the trouble to enquire—but where I blame you most is that you did not tell Mr. Kean you had no written engagement for Mobile. Why did you keep that secret?” “*I did not like to worry him.*” Then I said “*Your excessive delicacy has cost him close on \$2000—but Patty regularly pitched into him—He would talk to her on the subject until at last she said—“Mr. Brough it does not become a young woman to argue such points with an old man like you but since you will put the question to me I think had I been in your place my own sagacity would have told me that when a Manager talked of bad business and lowering the prices and at the same time wished to buy the engagement—I think I say that my own sagacity would have told me that there was something wrong—some trick intended—“Well he was ill and I thought it better to have his mind at ease” he said. “Mr. Brough” again said Patty, “My uncle engaged you not as his Physician to save his life—but as his agent to save his pocket. Brough never again mentioned the subject to Patty.*

He does such strange things that I think I have come to the charitable conclusion that he is *imbecile*. It really must be so for he appears to be generally respected but as he has no right to be so if he is (as he says) only in his sixtyeth year it does not at first occur to a body to think so *young* a man can have so lost his wits. We have had a very icy trip from New Orleans but the weather has moderated much in the last two days

Have you heard the sad fate of Gustavus Brooke the actor?¹³³

¹³³ Gustavus Brooke, English tragedian. He was lost on the *London* in the Bay of Biscay in January, 1866. According to Robert M. Sillard he was on his way to fill an Australian engagement with George Coppin, the Keans' former manager. (*Barry Sullivan and His Contemporaries*, II, 83.)

Wrecked in the Bay of Biscay—only a few passengers saved and he not of the number. Perhaps it is better so—for I fear whatever money he might make in Australia dissolute companions would dissipate and the wretched man might have perished for want or have lived on a miserable pittance that charity provided—He is saved that misery and humiliation, but it is a sad fate. Washington has burst up—that is the Theatre to which we were going and so we are here for four nights. We leave on Sunday for Cincinnati and proceed then to Baltimore where we act five nights and then we are in the hands of Mr Jarrett up to the end of our time in this country.¹³⁴ No more anxiety about houses—We have a very good certainty for the five weeks and our engagement is certain to pay him. Our Farewell benefit is the only night we take our chances on. I shall write to you again before starting for England and if you write to me you had better put it under cover to Jacob Barrow Esqr. Box 1344 Post Office New York and your letter will surely find me. Give our love to Mrs Smith and kindest regards to your family and believe me my dear old friend to be

Yours very sincerely
Ellen Kean

LXXXI

CHARLES KEAN TO MARY KEAN

Baltimore — 2 March
Friday 1866

My darling Child

We arrived here, after four days hard travelling, on Wednesday evening last 28th ult. & we may be truly grateful that we are able to report ourselves *safe*, for amidst the crash of blowing up steamers, breaking down of railroads sending their doomed passengers into rivers below, & last not least the assassinations in the public streets, we are fortunate indeed to have escaped unharmed—I have a terrible cold & hoarseness which give me doubts as to the practicability of acting, as announced, here on

¹³⁴ Henry C. Jarrett became in 1861 lessee and manager of Niblo's. (Odell, *Annals*, VII, 396.) He was later manager of the Boston Theatre.

Monday next & for the rest of the week. I am very glad to hear that you have taken the lodgings in George St. at £12.17 pr. week. You are really a capital woman of *business* Now you must arrange about the Brougham (to hold *four*). I won't have Pritchard. I won't have any body or any thing that *you* do not like. You shall be the governing head of the family, for *Papa* is getting "old & foolish" It will be so nice for you in George St. should your *natural* parents become *unnatural*, you have only to cross the street to your *adopted* parents. Let your carriage proprietor understand exactly what we require & tell him that we shall want the *same* coachman all the time that he may know our ways, hours, &. *Punctuality* is the great thing we shall require—You make the bargain & I will abide by it, but you must bear in mind that I shall require it at my disposal the whole day. . . .

The suction teeth I had made in N. Orleans & for which I paid £15 in English money are a failure & then I had another set made for five pounds which will last me till I get to London & see Crampton. Even if he were willing I will not now ask him to come down to Liverpool. There will be plenty of time after I reach Town before I act on Thursday 17th May to make them.

Our first appearance is postponed till the Thursday night to escape the Derby Wednesday. So does that satisfy you? I believe we shall open in Henry 8th.

Is not the end of Gustavus Brooke the actor shocking—I have also lost in the same vessel, London, one of my best & warmest friends in Sydney, New S. Wales. Dr. Woolley Principal of the University there.¹³⁵ He is lost, leaving a widow & several children. He was a very clever & agreeable man.

There is a Hatter's shop at the corner of Bond St. & Piccadilly—I forget the name—I wish you to order me a hat there in good time & bring it down to me in Liverpool—I think I have already told you that I have written to Poole the tailor. You will bring his things down with you—and tell Block & Grey to send into our lodgings before we arrive, but *after* the lodgings belong to us—

1½ dozen dinner Sherry

¹³⁵ Dr. John Woolley (1816-1866), first principal of Sydney University. After a distinguished career in English education he was chosen for this position in 1852. (E. Irving Carlyle in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, LXII, 432.)

½ dozen first class sherry for after dinner

½ dozen best port

½ dozen sparkling Moselle or Hock

& don't forget a couple dozen *pint* bottles of ale for Patty—perhaps Wallace Barrow would procure the last named for you.

Ask your carriage proprietor whether he could procure a boy to attend the carriage & open the door but according to your acct. of our rooms, he cannot sleep in our House. He might come in the morning & do what might be necessary. You will arrange all that business much better than I can point out, only remember that a stable boy is not usually very refined and are sometimes odoriferous & could not take his meals with our maids.

I shall send most of our Boxes I think to the Princess's Theatre—I have never heard a word from you or from Hunt & Roskell's about the necklace the pattern of which I selected for Mama—Have you seen about it? When you write on that subject put your note under cover to Cousin Patty & then Mama will not see it. Have you seen the Abells & the Johnstones lately?

Call on the Levy's of Russell Squ. & tell them when we are coming¹³⁶—He is important to me. Ask in good time Dr. Joy how much he requires & give him a cheque for the amount—Let me have all that off my mind before I arrive in England—

I forgot to mention in the list for Block & Grey ½ dozen old & mild brandy—and now I think I have said all for the present for the mail for England closes today. You will receive this I suppose, about the 21st or the 24th of this month. Direct to me under cover as usual to Jacob Barrow Esq. . . .

God bless you—Good bye

Your affect Father C. K.

¹³⁶ Joseph Moses Levy (1812-1888), founder of the *Daily Telegraph* and "a generous patron of music and drama." He and his family were old friends of the Keans. (W. A. J. Archbold in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, XXXIII, 162-163.)

LXXXII

ELLEN KEAN TO MISS MARIANNE SKERRETT

(incomplete)¹³⁷

... notice being taken of this, although requested, she said—"My good woman you really *must* go now for I want to lock up my house"¹³⁸ Upon which the black fiend seized a hatchet and struck the poor woman a terrible blow on the head. Her screams brought people to her aid and the Negress was with much difficulty secured by a policeman and taken to the station house. The Freedmans Bureau had the policeman arrested and sent to the military prison for interfering with a coloured person. Now these things will seem *impossible* to you, living under *blessed british laws*—but *these things are true* and of daily occurrence in this "law abiding country." It is known that *eight hundred thousand* coloured people have died of want and disease since the Emancipation act passed, and still they die and die. They fancy freedom relieves them from labour. They will not work—they will not starve if they can help it—and so some of them rob and murder and some lie down to die. Poor wretches! Victims of mistaken philanthropy and unscrupulous New England politicians who have enflamed and deceived them to their ruin and destruction.

The Southerner *alone* in *this country* cares for the negro. The Southerner *alone* knows his wants, his habits, his peculiarities—how to make him happy—how to make him useful—and *how far to trust* him. Slavery as an institution is repugnant to the feelings of every English person but if you wish the Negro to be well happy thriving and useful you must have *some* plan for *compelling* him to work. And *Negro* labour should have gone under some less objectionable *name* All that sweet patriarchal plantation life is gone for ever and with it the happiness and comfort of the poor Negro. As a grey headed old fellow said to me, "Our people will never be happy again" Poor creatures! The very indolence of their nature unfits them for self govern-

¹³⁷ It is impossible to date this letter. It was, however, obviously written before April, 1866.

¹³⁸ This is part of a letter to Miss Skerrett. It is not impossible that Mrs. Kean had in mind Fanny Kemble's *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation* (1863). Mrs. Kean and Mrs. Kemble held very different views on the subject of the Negroes and slavery.

ment and just as a team of fourteen mules requires a little old intelligent horse to lead them so the negroes require the white man to govern them. Kindly treated and under proper controul they may be made happy and useful but let them be unbridled, or in any authority, and they are mischievous bloodthirsty, and cruel. It was a wicked thing to turn them adrift in the world but the Emancipation act was not a philanthropic but a political measure, urged on by these New England fanatics who would crush the hearts out of southern bodies at any sacrifice that did not hurt themselves. They are as intolerant now, as when they left the English shores that they might worship God in their own way, and as soon as they were settled on new soil began burning alive everybody who did not worship God as *they* did. The old cold cruelty is in them still, and they have killed the negro to halt the southerner.

How they must miss their whitewashed warm log huts—their feather beds—their chickens in the pot—their plot of garden—and their half holyday once a week to “fix it up.” Their eggs their poultry and their vegetables they sold to the master *who had provided them* and were paid in money. They had many perquisites and privileges with house and food and clothes found them. There was a period when they all worked very hard—this was not the sugar *growing*—but the sugar *making* season, when they all in turn worked over hours as the work had to go on night and day—but this was followed by a period of *rest*. And is not this done in our own manufactories? When this work was over came the “Harvest home” of the Plantation with such feasting dancing singing laughing and jollity as they will never know again. No doctor now when they are sick—no Aunt Jane or Aunt Dinah to nurse them till they are well. People in England know nothing of the plantation negroes character or constitution. Mrs. Beecher Stow has shockingly misled them. She has done a cruel injustice to the southern people and absurdly ennobled the negro into an angel without wings. “Uncle Tom” is a myth and may be placed beside the mermaid and the unicorn, or *if* existing is such a curiosity that he should find a place in some museum by the side of a four headed baby. Religion has very little influence on negro morality. They love a “*Prayer Meeting*” as they love singing and dancing or anything else that amuses them—religion with them is a *sensation*.

The simplicity of our reformed religion is quite unsuited to their barbarous minds and it makes no real impression upon them. I believe a good sensible practical Roman Catholic Priest (not an innocent recluse, but a man of the world) would have more power to work good amongst them than a minister of any other religion. There is a certain *awe* mixed up with the faith that has a grasp on a barbarous people. I think the Baptist ministers are the very worst that could have got amongst them for in *this country* they are mostly *bigoted* and *political* and they have done great mischief among the coloured race. How little *good* they have done is shown in the fact that they, the negroes, are in many parts just returning to paganism. They do not worship *obi*—but there is a new pagan worship sprung up amongst them, and is spreading very fast.

Now I think I have given you enough of *black men* for the present writing—but it is a subject upon which I have ever felt a deep interest. I have spent many years in this country and have not gone about with my eyes and ears shut. I could write volumes but *I spare you*.

Now—Be it known to all those who take any interest in the matter, that we take our final farewell of America, in New York City on Monday April 16th and embark for England on the following Wednesday April 18th. We expect (God willing) to arrive in Liverpool in time to act a couple or three nights just to get our voices in order to commence our engagement at the Princesses on Thursday May 17th the *day after* the Derby. My darling daughter has taken apartments for us (—that is—all the upper part of a house) at 30 George street Hanover Square. The last time I saw her dear face, it was bathed in tears—and she was taking her last look at us from a window in the Waterloo Hotel Liverpool. At that same window with Gods blessing I shall see her face again beaming with joy watching for her first glance of her Parents. It has been a wearisome exile and we have made great sacrifices—but how thankful we should be that we return with the *result* we went for. We have been wonderfully preserved through many perils and when we once more set our feet on blessed british soil I think we shall never be tempted again to take any *very long voyage* We shall have accomplished forty thousand miles of sea in our three years tour and this *ought* to satisfy us. What universal rejoicing there

appears to be that Her Majesty is well enough to appear once more amongst her people. Even *here* the news was received with deep gratification. And I do not think with Thackeray that they are a tender hearted people either.

And now goodbye my dear Miss Skerrett—You will be glad of my return if only to get rid of my dispatches.

Ever affectionately yours

Ellen Kean

We have now just *forty days* to pass in the *Wilderness* not counting today and the day of sailing.

LXXXIII

ELLEN KEAN TO MARY KEAN

Boston

April 1st 1866

My dearest Mary

Your meeting with Mrs. Abell amuses us all amazingly.¹³⁹ I think it likely the shy little girl *did* rather astonish her—

My writing will be rather queer today as I have a big poultice on my finger. I have a poor imitation of a whitlow on my right hand and am very lame with my left foot. The fact is I have got *insipient gout*. I have been drinking ale to get up my strength—and it has done me a power of good and enabled me to eat some meat, but I am obliged to give it up as it has gone into my *toes*. I have taken colchicum and hope it will subside. Papa is flourishing and Patty better—but she is very weak. She will require many mutton chops and pints of porter to bring her up to strength. Dear child how the time runs on. Here it is the 1st of April and on the 18th we embark. By the 1st of May D. V. we shall be talking over our long separation. Papa and Patty have just gone for a walk and I enclose you a faithful portrait of your agricultural parent. I think you will slightly alter “the cut of his garments”—“*He may say they are persian*” but you may add—“You do not like this fashion” These last

¹³⁹ Unidentified.

days will pass quickly. We are all so joyous that our very spirits will make the time short.

God bless you darling
Your affectionate Mother
Ellen Kean

LXXXIV

ELLEN KEAN TO SOL SMITH

Boston

Monday April 9th 1866

My dear old Friend

We are near the close of our last engagement in this country, and it is well that it is our last, for *we* should not *last* much longer. My dear husband was laid up in Baltimore and had to forego his engagement there. He struggled through his nights at Philadelphia—had gout at Albany¹⁴⁰ and acted in big shoes—and was pretty near breaking down from ulcred [*sic*] sore throat. I had the docter three times yesterday and sharp remedies have had the effect of at any rate enabling him to act tonight (the Gamester) and I hope he will pull through the week. We leave this place on Saturday afternoon next—arrive in New York on Sunday morning—take our Farewell night on Monday 16th pack up on 17th and embark on the 18th God willing we shall be in Liverpool before this day three weeks—Our terrible tour South and West has nearly killed us all and we shall require some *good wholesome English fog* to set us up again.

By the by De Bar never gave us any explanation of the extraordinary proceedings at New Orleans, and I begin to think he had a hand in all that was done. It is a bad world Master Smith and managers worse than they were in the Ellen Tree days—You have a pretty crop of sharp gentlemen among you now. Actors are not what they were either and it is difficult to meet

¹⁴⁰ The Keans appeared in Albany for five nights beginning on March 26. "Total receipts \$1,800, opening to \$450 and closing to \$221. This engagement was clearly a failure, much to the disappointment of the manager, who expected that the magic of the names of Charles Kean and his wife, the far-famed Ellen Tree, would attract largely, but their day had gone by." [H. P. Phelps, *Players of a Century: A Record of the Albany Stage* (Albany, 1880), p. 351.]

with one who is not a professional trickster. Actors used to work *in the Theatre* now they work *out of it*. Mr. Kean has had a good deal to worry him—Mr. Cathcart is at his tricks again. He has become very careless and troublesome—and on Saturday night in the “Dam and chickens” scene in *Macduff* there was an outrageous call for Cathcart after the scene had changed to Lady Macbeth’s chamber. I walked on and commenced my scene when I was assailed by cries of “*We want Cathcart.*” I paused and surveyed the house—when again his gallery friends yelled “*We want Cathcart*” I made a low curtesy and slowly retired amidst shouts and yells—I said to the Prompter—Send for Mr. Cathcart and when he has been on change the scene I will not go on again—So the great sleeping scene of Lady Macbeth was omitted—There were a few weak hisses on the discovery of the omission and then all proceeded.¹⁴¹ Now my friend, this is all *got up*. I knew at the beginning of the evening what I had to expect by the pomposity and additional strut—and by the forced reception given. Now up to this time this very undemonstrative audience had been more than usually dull and subsided again until *Macduff* came on in the fifth act and then every time he opened his mouth there was a round of applause. The thing was *clumsily overdone* and culminated in this gross insult to me. I have been an actress over thirty years and I never saw or heard of such an outrage upon decency in all my experience. And this to occur in *Boston*—a city the *old* Americans looked upon as we looked upon *Edinburgh* as the Modern Athens—the seat of calm judgement and refined taste—Oh Boston “Fallen from your high estate” A few ruffians may create a disturbance in a *church*, but are there no decent people left to put down a vulgar riot? Could anything be more outrageous than to bring *Macduff* in Lady Macbeth’s chamber and drive a Lady from the legitimate performance of her scene, by brutal cries for an unseemly interruption to the proper progress of the play? Such a thing could not have happened in Boston thirty years ago. What is come to the people? Are all the good, refined and noble dead—or do they shut themselves up that they may not see the sad change in everything?

¹⁴¹ “Our leading actor, Mr. Cathcart, father of my friends ‘Jimmy and Roley’ (so long with Charles Kean) . . . had previously been leading actor with Alexander who had dismissed him at a moment’s notice for taking a call before the curtain after playing *Macduff* to Charles Kean’s *Macbeth*.” (Coleman, *Fifty Years of an Actor’s Life*, I, 283.)

The gentleman must have a serious reprimand as soon as he sets foot upon british soil. I will never again be subjected to even an attempt of the sort. The rod will not be the milder for laying a while in pickle.

New York April 15th

Charles broke down after the Monday in Boston—He crawled through the Gamester looking like a ghost. He might have got through with care and kindness from those around him but the anger he felt at the tricks of this man and the insult I received threw him into *gout*. His throat being sensitive it fixed *there* and threatened to be *serious*. I was better satisfied when it attacked his foot. It is too bad however that people you pay largely for comfort and security should be your tormentors. He has cost us \$2000. That is the sum we should have received had we played those given up nights for I have no hesitation in saying to you that it was this angry excitement that broke him down. We arrived here this morning—his foot is still wrapped up in flannel—but he will act to morrow night, Monday 16th We pack up on Tuesday and embark Wednesday. I shall leave this open to tell you the results of tomorrow night and then goodbye until you hear from us the other side of the Anlantic [*sic*].

Tuesday 17th. We had a fine house last night and the best people came out. The private carriages choked up the streets—under the circumstances I call it a wonderful house. The night was badly and scantily announced. We had a pouring wet day and the car strike came a *crisis*. Not a single car ran after seven o'clock in the evening and yet we had \$3000 Charles was very weak but he got through wonderfully and made a very pretty speech that hit them very hard. He is not the worse today for his work being over—and is now sitting with three friends of over twenty years standing and is as jolly as a sand boy.

We embark tomorrow at three o'clock and please God by this time tomorrow night we shall be well on the ocean. Once more goodbye to you and Mrs. Smith with all our kindest wishes and regards. Do not let us lose sight of you. I will write occasionally and tell you how the little Isle goes on and you must give me the news of this great continent. Yours dear friend

Most sincerely

Ellen Kean

LXXXV

ELLEN KEAN TO SOL SMITH

Old England

Liverpool

May 3d 1866

My dear Friend

We arrived here on Sunday April 29th and found our dear child in health and so improved. We had a fair passage—no really bad weather—some rough seas from distant storms, but nothing more. We were a little longer than the usual time, but that was not a marvel to any of us as we had *eleven clergymen* on board and the number did not neutralize the old prejudice.

We had some very nice people and some *very queer* ones—and there was the usual amount of ship scandal—Mrs. Jordan of Boucicault [?] notoriety was among the *queer*.¹⁴² Our table was remarkably pleasant and *respectable*.—Mr. Kean regained his appetite and so did Miss Chapman and the sea air did us all good. We opened last night in the Merchant of Venice to a house crowded to excess & they called us on again and again just I suppose for the pleasure of gazing on our charms—but they were truly rejoiced to see us. I enclose you a notice from the Liverpool Daily Post—I send it thus because a newspaper may never reach you. We shall play an enormous engagement in London and I imagine Henry 8th and Louis will carry us all through. Even at Newcastle upon Tyne they talk of one play being enough for six nights—“What do you say to that Master Brooke” You *listen* on the 17th of May and you will hear the shouts when he enters on the Princesses stage.

I have no news theatrical or political for you and so will conclude with

Much happiness to you all

Yours sincerely

Ellen Kean

I send you three notices which will give you some ideas of how we stand in blessed Old England. “The rare old man”¹⁴³ and the “corpulent woman with a cracked voice” are seen through very different spectacles on this side of the Atlantic.

¹⁴² Unidentified.

¹⁴³ The word looks like *rare*. Mrs. Kean’s handwriting sometimes cannot be deciphered.

INDEX

- Abbotsford, 104
 Abell, Mrs., 169
 Abells, The, 165
 Aberdeen, 74
 Adelphi Theatre (London), 48, 73, 89, 95
Age, The, 51
 Albany, 29, 170
 Alexander (theatre manager), 171
 Alhambra (London), 85
 America, 3, 4, 8, 21, 25, 28, 37, 54, 64, 71, 72, 74, 75, 77, 79, 80, 82, 85, 86, 88, 89, 91, 92, 93, 96, 119, 132, 134, 151, 168
American Advertiser, The (Baltimore), 115
 Anderson, James R., 16, 63, 82
 Angel, Dr. R. (or S. M.), 147
Annals of the New York Stage (Odell), 9
 Arch Street Theatre (Philadelphia), 41, 42
 Astor, John Jacob, 123
 Astor House (New York), 15
 Astoria (Irving), 123
 Astoria (Oregon), 122, 123
As You Like It, 11
 Athenaeum Club (London), 77, 78, 81, 87, 97
 Austen-Leigh, R. A., 33
 Austin, Mrs., 41
 Australia, 22, 23, 24, 26, 82, 89, 96, 97, 98, 103, 105, 141, 143, 145, 163
Autobiographical Sketch of Mrs. John Drew, 9
Autobiography of Joseph Jefferson, 24, 25
 Avon Springs (New York), 44
 Baltimore, 29, 41, 48, 78, 80, 111, 113, 114, 133, 152, 163, 170
 Barclay and Livingston, 114
 Barnum, Phineas T., 85
 Barnum's Hotel (Baltimore), 113
 Barrett, "Gentleman George," 15
 Barrett, Lawrence, 160
 Barrow, Jacob, 163, 165
 Barrow, Louise, 139
 Barrow, Mr. and Mrs., 99, 109, 137
 Barrow, Wallace, 165
 Barrow, William, 97
 Barrymore, Ethel, 68
 Barrymore, John, 68
 Barrymore, Lionel, 68
 Bateman, Hezekiah L., 142
 Bates, James M., 13, 14, 63, 64
 Bates, John, 64
 Bath, 5, 52, 53, 74, 78, 85, 94, 97
 Bayley, J., 11, 33
 Bayley, Rev. John, 33
 Becher, William Wrixon, 51
 Belfast, 85, 88, 90, 93
 Belton, Fred, 29, 35, 143
 Berkeley, Colonel, 41
 Biddle House (Detroit), 142
 Birmingham, 8, 96
 Bishop, Mme Anna, 71
 Bishop, Sir Henry, 71, 125
Black-Eyed Susan (Jerrold), 153
 Block and Grey, 164
 Booth, Edwin, 135
 Booth, John Wilkes, 112
 Booth, Junius Brutus, 57
Born to Good Luck, 72
 Boseman (Montana), 129
 Boston, 4, 10, 29, 41, 47, 60, 80, 113, 139, 142, 152, 169, 170, 171, 172
 Boston Theatre, 163
 Boucicault, Dion, 86, 89, 95
 Boucicaults, The, 89
 Boulogne, 92
 Boursiquot, Anne Darby, 89
 Bowery Theatre (New York), 41, 154
 Bradford (England), 97
 Bradshaw, Mrs. (Maria Tree), 5
 Brighton, 88, 97
 Bristol, 49, 74, 78, 97
Britannia, S. S., 59
 British Columbia, 103, 123, 125, 127, 130, 131
 British Museum, 19
British Queen, S. S., 47
 Broadhurst, Mr., 138
 Broadway Theatre, 28, 141, 154
 Brooke, Gustavus, 162, 164
 Brooklyn, 113, 133, 142
 Brough, William Francis, 141, 143, 146, 153, 154, 155, 161, 162
 Brown, T. Allston, 28, 79, 86
Brutus (Payne), 3
 Buchanan, 52, 53
 Buffalo, 6, 44, 63
 Bulwer-Lytton, Sir Edward, 10, 11, 44
 Bunn, Alfred, 71, 92
 Burton, Wm. E., 64
 Burton's Chambers Street Theatre (New York), 64, 154
 Butler, Pierce, 37, 70
 Butler, Mrs. Pierce (see Fanny Kemble)

- Cain, R. H., 133
 Cairo (Illinois), 144
 Calcraft, J., 1
 Calcraft, John W., 70, 71
 Caldwell (miner), 129
 Caldwell, James H., 7
 California, 25, 26, 82, 105, 106
 Canada, 44, 131, 133, 141
 Cardwell, Edward, 131
 Carey, Ann, 34
 Carlisle, Earl of, 87
 Carmarthen, 1
 Cathcart, Senior, 171
 Cathcart, James F., 23, 26, 27, 75, 91, 100, 101, 102, 105, 107, 137, 148, 149, 171
 Cathcart, Rowley, 171
 Celeste, Mme (Celeste Elliott), 73, 95
 Centlivre, Mrs. Susannah, 11
 Chambers, Mary (see Mrs. Edmund Kean)
 Chanfrau, Frank, 15
 Chapman, Miss E. (Patty), 23, 29, 74, 75, 85, 98, 104, 105, 109, 121, 125, 134, 135, 139, 147, 149, 150, 152, 156, 161, 162, 165, 169, 173
 Chapman, John, 5, 75, 79
 Chapman, Mrs. John (Anne Tree), 5, 75, 79
 Chapman, Meggy, 109
 Chapman, Nancy, 33, 75, 85, 139
 Charleston (South Carolina), 10, 57, 58, 60, 61, 78, 79, 83
 Charlotte, Queen, 122
 Chelsea, 29
 Cheltenham, 78
 Chicago, 29, 114, 116, 133, 135, 139, 140, 141, 148
 Chippendale, Wm. H., 9, 57, 58, 59
Chronology of the American Stage, The (Wemyss), 118
 Cincinnati, 14, 29, 45, 61, 63, 64, 114, 117, 119, 120, 121, 133, 152, 163
Cinderella (Rossini-Lacy), 79
 Clapp, Henry Austin, 38
Clari, The Maid of Milan (Payne), 5, 125
 Cleveland, 29, 133, 135, 142, 143, 144, 145
Cleveland Leader, The, 145
 Cole, "Old," 148
 Cole, John William, 4, 5, 17, 30, 31
 Coleman (theatre manager), 118
 Coleman, John, 30, 35, 76, 85
Colleen Bawn, The (Boucicault), 89, 95
 Collins, John, 65
 Colman, George, 16, 42
 Columbia River, 103, 104, 122, 123
 Columbus (Ohio), 27, 142, 143, 144, 145
 Comstock, Henry T. P., 129, 130, 131
 Cook, Dutton, 32
 Cooper, Dr. White, 108
 Coppin, George, 26, 98, 106, 107, 115, 117, 118, 119, 141, 143, 161, 162
 Cork, 76, 81, 85
Corsican Brothers, The (Boucicault), 89
Courier, The, 51
 Coutts', 114
 Coutts, Angela Burdett, 53
 Covent Garden Theatre, 3, 5, 37, 70, 92
 Crampton, Mr., 108, 150, 164
 Creighton, 51
 Cushman, Charlotte, 39, 69, 70, 71
Daily News, The (London), 134
Daily Telegraph, The (London), 165
 Davenport, E. L., 65
 Davy (or Davis, stage manager), 154
 De Bar, Benedict, 113, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 141, 144, 153, 154, 155, 157, 158, 170
 De Bar's Theatre (St. Louis), 143
 Delavigne, Casimir, 31, 89
 Denin, Susan, 15
 Denman, Admiral, 127
 Detroit, 29, 142
 Dickens, Augustus, 134
 Dickens, Charles, 134
Douglas (Home), 2
 Douglas, Sir James, 125
Dramatic Life As I Found It (Ludlow), 111
Dramatic Reminiscences (Vandenhoff), 15
 Drew, John (the younger), 15
 Drew, Mrs. John (Mrs. Henry B. Hunt), 9
 Drury Lane Theatre, 1, 2, 3, 5, 33, 37, 78, 80, 85, 88, 92, 95, 97
 Dublin, 4, 51, 52, 53, 59, 65, 68, 69, 70, 76, 78, 81, 85, 87, 88, 90, 92, 96
 Duffy, William, 42
 Dumas, Alexandre, 89
 East India Company, 2
 East India House, 4
 Eddy, Edward, 113, 153, 154, 157, 158, 159
 Eddy, Edward, Jr., 154
 Edinburgh, 5, 52, 53, 63, 74, 142
 England, 4, 6, 9, 16, 18, 21, 26, 45, 48, 55, 56, 57, 59, 60, 67, 68, 70, 75, 76, 78, 79, 83, 87, 91, 95, 96, 98, 109, 113, 115, 116, 123, 124, 127, 128, 130, 131, 132, 136, 141, 143, 149, 156, 159, 163, 165, 167, 168, 173

- Era, The*, 76
 Esquimalt (Vancouver Island), 124
 Eton, 1, 2, 30, 33, 34, 88, 92
 Eureka Theatre (San Francisco), 100
 Everett, George, 23, 75, 121, 146, 148
 Exeter, 51, 97, 143
 Eyre, Gov. John, 149

Fanny Small, S. S., 107
 Farren, George P., 12, 68, 69
 Farren, Mrs. George P., 12, 17, 68
Fashion (Mowatt), 65
 Faucit, Helen, 39, 69, 70
 Fechter, Charles, 89
 Fenians, 26, 140, 141
 Field, Eliza Riddle (Mrs. J. M.), 12, 68
 Fitzgerald, Seymour, 131
 Flynn (theatre manager), 144
Follies of a Night, The (Planché), 11, 12
 Forbes, W. C., 58, 60
 Ford, John T., 111
 Forrest, Edwin, 13, 41, 57, 63, 85, 86, 93, 109
 Forster, John, 134
 France, 81, 95
Francis I (Kemble), 6, 70
 Fraser, Donald, 109
 Frean, Theodore, 93
 Freedman's Bureau, 166
Further Records (Kemble), 70

Galaxy, The, 31, 38
Gamester, The (Moore), 9, 11, 25, 158, 170, 172
Gazette, The (Cincinnati), 117
 Germany, 4
 Gifford, Lord, 127, 128
 Gladstone, William Ewart, 20, 131
Glance at New York, A (Baker), 15
 Glasgow, 3, 8, 52, 53, 74
Glencoe (Talfourd), 49
Globe, The (London), 52
 Gloucester (England), 78
 Graham, 42
Great Western, S. S., 49
 Greenwich (England), 160
 Greenwood, T. L., 91
 Grosch Brothers, 129
 Grove's Opera Company, 144

 Hackett, James H., 28, 155
 Hackett, James K., 155
 Halifax, Mr., 138
Hamlet, 11, 19, 28, 42, 49, 118, 120, 134, 141, 146, 156, 157
 Hampshire, 54, 55, 56
 Hankey, Major, 76
 Hanky, Mr., 76
 Harney, Gen. W. S., 77

 Harris, Augustus, 76
 Havana, 48
 Haverfordwest, 1
 Haymarket Theatre (London), 2, 3, 48, 49, 52, 57, 60
 Haymarket Theatre (Melbourne), 98
 Heller, Robert, 142
 Henriquez, Dr., 139
 Her Majesty's Theatre (London), 85
 Hield, William, 152
History of the American Stage (Brown), 79
History of the New York Stage, A (Brown), 28
 Hogarth, George, 134
 Holland, 3
 Home, Rev. John, 2
Home Journal, The (New York), 89
Honey Moon, The (Tobin), 11, 53
 Hooker, 126
 Horndean (England), 55, 56, 71
 Hudson, James, 72
 Hudson Bay Company, 123
 Hughes, John, 46, 47, 50
 Hull (England), 74, 96
Hunchback, The (Knowles), 11, 12, 45
 Hunt, Mrs. Henry B. (Mrs. John Drew), 68
 Hunt and Roskell, 138, 165
 Hutton, Laurence, 4, 5

 Idaho, 129
 Imperial Theatre (Vienna), 67
Ion (Talfourd), 11, 17, 60
 Ireland, 1, 3, 4, 74, 131, 141
Irish Lion, The, 72
Irish Tutor, The (Buckstone), 65
Iron Chest, The (Colman), 3, 42
 Irving, Sir Henry, 19, 57, 76
 Irving, Washington, 123
 Italy, 34

Jack Sheppard (Ainsworth), 153
 Jackson, A. W., 84
 Jackson (maid), 23, 120, 121, 147, 148, 149, 150
 Jamaica, 27, 107, 149
 Jarrett, Henry C., 163
Jealous Wife, The (Colman), 16, 28, 65, 69, 98, 99, 118, 134, 155, 157
 Jefferson, Joseph, III, 24, 25
 Jerrold, Douglas, 31
 Jersey, Isle of, 8, 55
 Johnsonville and Nashville Railroad, 151
 Johnstones, The, 165
 Jones, Forrest, and Duffy, 42
 Jordan, Mrs., 173
Journal of a Residence in America (Kemble), 70

- Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation* (Kemble), 70, 166
 Joy, Dr., 23, 75, 85, 98, 108, 114, 153, 165
 Judkins, Capt., 137
 Kean, Edmund, 1, 2, 3, 30, 32, 34, 46, 57, 65
 Kean, Mrs. Edmund (Mary Chambers), 1, 2
 Kean, Mary Maria (Mrs. Cosmo Gordon Logie), 8, 23, 34, 37, 38, 97, 103, 133
 Keeley, Robert, 18
 Keeley, Mrs. Robert, 37
 Keene, Laura, 76
 Kemble, Charles, 37, 57, 70
 Kemble, Fanny (Mrs. Pierce Butler), 5, 6, 34, 36, 37, 38, 69, 70, 71, 166
 Kemble, John Philip, 37, 70
 Kennedy, Gov. A. E., 103, 105, 125, 127
 Kennedy, Mrs. A. E., 105, 125
 Kennedy, Miss, 126
 Kentucky, 144
 Keydell, 55, 56, 71
 King (theatre manager), 161
King Henry V, 7, 21
King Henry VIII, 27, 28, 98, 99, 118, 146, 155, 157, 164, 173
King John, 14, 16, 18, 66, 67, 68, 116
King Lear, 28, 141, 155, 157, 159
King Richard II, 7, 31
King Richard III, 14, 19, 68, 141, 146, 155, 157
Knickerbocker Magazine, The, 48
 Knowles, James Sheridan, 11, 44, 45
 Kotzebue, August von, 10, 11
Lady of Lyons, The (Bulwer-Lytton), 11, 44, 45
 Lamb, Charles, 4
 Lansdowne, Marchioness of, 122
 Lardner, Dionysius, 89
 Larkin, "Paddy," 79, 82, 83
 Laura Keane's Theatre (New York), 76
 Lee, Henry, 38
 Leeds, 74
 Leonard (actor), 64, 65
 Levy, Joseph Moses, 165
 Lewes, George Henry, 31, 32
 Lincoln, President, 28, 87, 111, 133
 Lind, Jenny, 69
 Lindell House (St. Louis), 115, 116, 142
 Liverpool, 29, 78, 80, 82, 91, 108, 138, 153, 156, 164, 168, 170, 173
Liverpool Daily Post, The, 173
 Livingston Springs (Tennessee), 151
 Logie, Charles Henry Gordon, 23
 Logie, Dr. Cosmo Gordon, 23, 30
 London, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 14, 18, 30, 49, 54, 55, 57, 65, 73, 74, 76, 78, 80, 87, 89, 91, 92, 95, 97, 108, 109, 113, 115, 120, 133, 137, 138, 139, 164, 173
London, S. S., 162, 164
London's Lost Theatres of the Nineteenth Century (Sherson), 5
 Louis Napoleon, 77, 87
 Louis XI (Delavigne), 31, 89, 99, 118, 135, 153, 155, 157, 173
 Louisville, 14, 29, 45, 63, 64, 115, 116, 117, 118, 144, 146, 151, 160
 Lovell, George, 16, 60
Love's Sacrifice (Lovell), 60
 Ludlow and Smith, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 21, 24, 54, 57, 65, 68, 79, 113, 135, 154
 Ludlow, Noah M., 7, 11, 12, 16, 17, 43, 54, 56, 58, 59, 60, 63, 110, 111
 Ludlow, Mrs. Noah M., 45
 Lyceum Theatre (London), 85, 95
Macbeth, 11, 67, 141, 144, 145, 157, 159
 Macready, William Charles, 9, 13, 15, 37, 49, 56, 57, 63, 65, 69, 70, 71, 74, 76, 82, 91, 134
Macready's Diaries and Reminiscences, 70
 Maddox (theatre manager), 76
 Maguire, Thomas, 100, 101, 102
 Maguire's Opera House (San Francisco), 25, 100
 Mainfold, H. W., 29
 Malibran, Marie Félicité, 41
 Manchester (England), 50, 74, 78, 80
Manchester Guardian, The, 50
 Marston, Westland, 35
 Marylebone Theatre (London), 85
 Massinger, Philip, 42
 Mathias, Mr., 122
 Maturin, Charles, 42
 McLaughlin, Patrick, 129
 McVicker, James, 135
 McVicker, Mary (Mrs. Edwin Booth), 135
 Melbourne, 23, 24, 97, 98, 106, 131
Melbourne Argus, The, 23
 Memphis, 29, 116, 118, 146, 147, 152
Merchant of Venice, The, 11, 12, 118, 156, 157, 173
Merry Wives of Windsor, The, 38, 39
 Metropolitan Hotel (New York), 108
 Metropolitan Theatre (New York), 154
 Mexico, 130
 Milwaukee, 29, 133, 135
Mirror, The (New York), 89
 Mississippi, 6

- Mitchell, Miss (actress), 121
 Mobile, 6, 7, 10, 11, 16, 29, 43, 44, 56,
 57, 60, 61, 62, 66, 67, 115, 151, 152,
 154, 157, 160, 161, 162
 Montana, 129
 Moran, Edward, 50, 51
 Morant Bay, 149
Morning Chronicle, The (London), 33
Morning Post, The (London), 48
 Morris, Clara, 27, 36
 Morris, George Pope, 41, 89
 Morris, Maynard, 41
 Morton, Thomas, 42
 Moses, Mrs., 98
Mount Alexander Mail (Castlemaine),
 24
 Mount Helena, 123
 Mount Hood, 123
 Mowatt, Anna Cora (Mrs. Ritchie),
 65, 73
Much Ado About Nothing, 11, 60, 155,
 157
 Murray, Lindley, 126

 Nashville, 29, 144, 146, 149
 Natchez, 3, 45, 46, 54
 National Theatre (Cincinnati), 63
 National Theatre (New York), 4, 47,
 48, 88
 Neil House (Columbus), 144
 Nevada, 129
 Newcastle, Duke of, 20, 21, 130
 Newcastle-on-Tyne, 97, 173
 New American Theatre (New Or-
 leans), 7
 New England, 166, 167
 New Orleans, 3, 7, 10, 13, 16, 29, 54,
 55, 56, 57, 58, 60, 61, 62, 65, 66, 67,
 71, 78, 85, 113, 115, 116, 117, 118,
 135, 141, 146, 147, 150, 153, 154, 156,
 157, 160, 161, 162, 164, 170
 New St. Charles Theatre (New Or-
 leans), 7
 New St. Louis Theatre (St. Louis), 7
New Way to Pay Old Debts, A (Mas-
 singer), 42
 New Westminster (British Columbia),
 103
 New York City, 3, 4, 6, 14, 16, 18, 26,
 27, 28, 29, 41, 42, 43, 45, 46, 47, 55,
 57, 58, 60, 61, 63, 64, 66, 67, 71, 76,
 78, 80, 84, 85, 86, 88, 90, 106, 107,
 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115,
 116, 117, 132, 133, 136, 137, 138, 141,
 145, 152, 154, 163, 168, 170, 172
New York Herald, The, 84
 New York State, 44
New York Tribune, The, 117
 Niagara Falls, 133, 136

 Niblo, William, 75, 76, 81, 82, 86, 87,
 95
 Niblo's Garden (or Theatre), 47, 65,
 75, 76, 85, 86, 87, 88, 93, 109, 163
 Nixon, James, 86, 91, 93
 Occidental Hotel (San Francisco), 25
Octoroon, The (Boucicault), 89
 Odell, George C. D., 9, 10, 14, 28, 41,
 48
 "Old Virginia," (miner), 129
Olive Branch, 147
 O'Neill, Eliza, 50, 51
One Hundred Years Old (Jackson),
 110
 Ontario, 129
On the Stage (Kemble), 70
 Opera House (Chicago), 135
 Oregon, 77, 103, 122, 123, 129
 O'Riley, Peter, 129
Othello, 3

 Pakenham, General, 148
 Palmerston, Viscount, 131
 Panama, 27, 107
 Parepa, Euphrosyne (Mrs. Carl
 Rosa), 142
 Paris, 83, 84, 89, 109
 Park Theatre (New York), 3, 9, 10,
 13, 15, 41, 46, 48, 55, 58, 59, 60, 61,
 65, 66, 67, 74, 84, 143
 Parsons, Charles, 118
 Payne, John Howard, 3, 5, 125
 Penn, William, 140
 Penrod, Manny, 129
Perfection (Bayley), 11
 Phelps, Samuel, 91
 Philadelphia, 10, 29, 41, 42, 58, 59, 60,
 61, 64, 78, 80, 111, 113, 129, 139, 142,
 170
 Phipps, Col. C. B., 19, 20, 21
Picayune, The (New Orleans), 157
 Pike, Samuel W., 117, 118
 Pittsburgh, 29, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119,
 133, 152
 Placide, Tom, 12
 Planché, J. R., 11
 Playfair, Giles, 34
 Plymouth (England), 52, 53, 97
 Poole (tailor), 164
 Pope, Alexander, 94
 Portland (Oregon), 29, 103, 104, 122,
 123, 124
 Potter, J. S., 124
 Povey, John, 67
 Powell, Lewis (alias Payne), 133
 Price, Stephen, 2, 5, 46, 57, 88
 Prince Consort, 122
 Princess's Theatre (London), 8, 18,
 20, 21, 23, 48, 65, 73, 76, 89, 91, 95,
 115, 133, 165, 168, 173

- Pritchard, Mr., 164
Punch, 23, 31, 134
 Quin, Mrs. (Miss Tree), 5
 Ravel family, 17
Records of a Girlhood (Kemble), 70
Records of Later Life (Kemble), 70
 Reeves, John Sims, 73
Reminiscences of a Dramatic Critic (Clapp), 38
 Richardson's Show, 124
Richelieu (Bulwer-Lytton), 109
 Richmond (Virginia), 41, 69, 109, 110
 Robertson, Agnes (Mrs. Dion Boucicault), 39, 89, 95
 Robin Hood Opera Company, 89
 Robins, Edmund, 46, 47, 48
Romeo and Juliet, 11, 59
 Rosa, Carl, 142
 Sadler's Wells Theatre (London), 91
 St. Charles Hotel (New Orleans), 147
 St. Charles Theatre (New Orleans), 44, 57, 113, 115, 148, 154
 St. James's Theatre (London), 48, 95
 St. John's Wood, 125
 St. Kilda Park, 24
 St. Louis, 6, 7, 10, 11, 13, 29, 44, 45, 46, 54, 56, 57, 60, 61, 62, 63, 66, 67, 111, 112, 113, 114, 116, 118, 122, 133, 135, 141, 142, 143, 144, 153, 154, 155
St. Louis Republican, 12, 133, 135
 St. Louis Theatre, 114
 Salt Hill, 83, 84
 San Francisco, 25, 29, 97, 103, 104, 105, 107, 122, 123, 126
 San Juan Island, 77
 Saratoga (New York), 133
Sardanapalus (Byron), 76
 Savannah, 10, 60
Scotia, S. S., 137
 Scotland, 74, 85, 96
 Scott, James, 63
 Scott, Sir Walter, 104
 Seward, Mrs. William H., 133
 Seymour, Frederick, 125, 126, 127
 Shakespeare, William, 2, 14, 15, 18, 19, 31, 37, 38, 51, 70, 104, 105, 138, 145
 Shannon, Mr., 138
Shaugraun, The (Boucicault), 89
 Sheffield, 74
 Shelby, the traveler, 128
 Sherson, Erroll, 5
 Siddons, Mrs., 37, 39, 51, 70
 Sierra Leone, 103
Sierra Nevada, S. S., 122
 Sillard, Robert M., 98, 162
 Simmonds (theatre manager), 117
 Simpson, Edmund Shaw, 16, 55, 56, 65, 66, 67, 68
 Simpson, M. H., 8
 Skerrett, Marianne, 122, 133, 137, 166, 169
 Skinner, Otis, 1
 Slough (England), 83
 Smith, Edward Tyrrell, 78, 85
 Smith, Mark, 110, 112
 Smith, Sol, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 21, 43, 45, 54, 58, 74, 97, 110, 111, 112, 159, 170
 Smith, Mrs. Sol (Martha Mathews), 45
 Smith, Mrs. Sol (Elizabeth Pugsley), 56, 65, 112, 155
 Smith, Sol, Jr., 112, 143
 Sothorn and Marlowe, 19
Spirit of the Times, The, 9
 Standard Theatre (London), 80
 Stowe, Harriet Beecher, 167
 Strakosch, Maurice, 142
Stranger, The (Kotzebue), 11, 155, 157
 Stuart, Mary Vos, 12
 Stuart, William, 86, 87
 Sullivan, Barry, 23, 57, 145
Sunday Times (London), 5
 Swan River (Australia), 103
 Swansea, 1, 83
 Sydney (New South Wales), 160, 164
 Sydney University, 164
 Talfourd, Sir Thomas Noonan, 11, 49
 Tennessee, 149
 Terry, Ellen, 31, 36, 39
 Terry, Kate, 39
 Thackeray, William Makepeace, 169
 Theatre Royal (Dublin), 70
Theatrical Management (Smith), 16, 111
 Thorndyke, Louise, 89
 Thorne, James, 63
 Tidswell, Charlotte, 34
Times, The (London), 33, 93
 Tobin, John, 10, 11, 53
Town and Country (Morton), 3, 42
 Tree, Anne (see Mrs. Chapman)
 Tree, Beerbohm, 39
 Tree, Mr., 4
 Tree, Mrs., 96
 Tremont House (Boston), 60
 Trenton (Ontario), 129
Tribune, H. M. S., 127
Tribune, The (Detroit), 143
Twelfth Night, 5
Two Gentlemen of Verona, The, 65
 United Kingdom, 78

- United States, 4, 6, 7, 8, 25, 26, 54, 55,
 63, 65, 70, 73, 74, 80, 82, 87, 91, 94,
 95, 96, 98, 103, 131, 134, 141, 142,
 156
 Valparaiso, 127
 Vancouver Island, 26, 103, 122, 124,
 125, 127, 128
 Vandenhoff, George, 15, 66
 Varieties Theatre (New Orleans), 115
 Vauxhall Gardens (London), 85
 Venetian Council of Ten, 132
 Vezin, Herman, 32
 Vicksburg, 45, 110
 Victoria, Queen, 18, 122, 131, 132, 137
 Victoria (Vancouver Island), 103, 125
 Victoria City, 99
 Vienna, 67
 Viennoise Children, 15
 Vining, James, 115, 133
 Virginia City (Nevada), 29, 129, 130
 Virginia Springs (Virginia), 44
Virginian, The (Wister), 70
 Wales, 81, 83, 96
 Wallack, Henry, 88
 Wallack, James William (the elder),
 4, 47, 88, 90, 93
 Wallack, James William (the
 younger), 88
 Wallack, Lester, 88
 Wallack's Lyceum, 88
 Warner, Mrs., 91
 Washington, D. C., 111, 112, 144, 152,
 163
 Washington Territory, 127
 Washover Mine, 130
 Waterford (Ireland), 1, 103, 104
 Waterloo Hotel (Liverpool), 82, 168
 Webb, Charles, 12
 Webster, Ben, 48
 Webster, Benjamin N., 48, 73
 Webster, Margaret, 48
 Weiss, Josephine, 67
 Wellington, Duke of, 148
 Wemyss, Francis C., 118
Wife's Secret, The (Lovell), 16, 25,
 60, 67, 68, 69, 76, 99
 Wigan, Alfred, 95, 108
 Wigan, Mrs., 108
 Wilkes, Commodore, 104
 Willamette River, 122
 Willard, Henry, 82, 84, 85, 86, 87
 Willis, Nathaniel Parker, 89
Willmer and Smith's European Times,
 91
 Wilson, John, 73
 Windsor Castle, 18
 Winter Garden Theatre (New York),
 82, 83, 84, 86, 87, 109
 Wister, Owen, 70
Woman's Wit (Knowles), 44
Wonder, The (Centlivre), 11, 12, 17
 Wood (or Woods), 117
 Wood, George, 28
 Woolgar, Sarah (Mrs. Alfred Mellon),
 72, 73
 Woolley, Dr. John, 164
 York, 74
 Yorkshire, 74
 Young, Charles, 57
 Young, Mrs., 99, 137
 Youngs, The, 99

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